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THE LADY FROM L.U.S.T. #11

LADY IN HEAT



Rod Gray

If any girl can handle Rosemary's Baby all grown up,
It's Eve Drum, secret agent in a mini-skirt...

Orgy of Evil

The rada drums were moaning and the lights in the room began to dim. Half-a-dozen couples were sprawled on the floor between me and the ladies' room.

The lights went out. The room was pitch black.

I heard a gasp nearby.

“He comes!” a woman screamed. “Satanus comes!”

I told myself not to be an idiot.

And yet—

Something was forming inside the flames.

A man-beast stood there in the flames, a man-beast with the chest and torso of a giant human being, heavily muscled and covered with hair. Below—were the cloven-hoofed, shaggy legs of a goat!

I am a hip chick. I like to think of myself as being as sophisticated as anyone on Earth. But those red eyes ate at me. This thing really *was* the Devil!

**LADY
IN
HEAT**

by Rod Gray

an espionage novel

A TOWER BOOK

LADY IN HEAT

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CHAPTER ONE

The redheaded girl lay naked on the marble altar.

That altar had been the pride of the Benedictine monks at one time, it had been carved by a master hand, it showed silvery in the moonlight that poured through an archway of the ruined chapel, tinting the girl a pallid white as she writhed and moaned. The voices of the worshipers were muted, sounding with hollow tones through the charred stone pillars and crumbled walls which were all that remained of what had been a proud abbey chapel when Henry II ruled England.

The wind moved across the moors, carrying with it wisps of fog that swirled about their shrouded bodies as men and women knelt before the altar where the unfrocked priest was celebrating the Black Mass. The moon was a ball of brilliance that shone down on us through low, scudding clouds, casting long black shadows from the few pillars that were left of the great chapel which had made Exmoor Abbey famous seven hundred years before.

I knelt with the others. My name is Eve Drum, I am an agent for L.U.S.T., the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists, which is an off-shoot of the C.I.A. and the National Security Agency. Under the wrap which I had brought with me from London, I was just as naked as the redhead on the altar. The night was warm, it was early summer, but even so, I shivered as I watched the unfrocked priest lift the consecrated chalice to the sky and intone the blasphemous words that are a part of the Black Mass.

"Venite, benedicti Satanus, in regnum aeternum!"

The acolytes chanted the response, heads bent and hands clasped together. Behind them, this hooded, shrouded congregation echoed their blasphemous words.

I'm no religious nut but I felt angry as those sonorous Latin syllables rolled out over the audience. Had I not been here on an assignment for L.U.S.T., I wouldn't have been caught dead in a place like this. I admitted to a sense of excitement. My heart was hammering away fifteen to the dozen.

The celebrant of the Black Mass was a defrocked priest, a necessary integral of the desecration; so also was the consecrated chalice and the host that had been properly blessed, then stolen from a church. He wore the chasuble, that brocaded garment draped in front and back of his otherwise naked body, while the two women who were his acolytes wore versions similar to his vestment.

As the women bowed low at the elevation, their chasubles slipped upward, baring their pallid buttocks to the sight of the congregation. Their legs were shapely, firmly fleshed, very provocative in high-heeled slippers, their buttocks plump and pretty.

The worshipers were chanting now, Latin verses which I did not understand. The man beside me, Kenneth Derwent, a barrister for the cult, tugged at my sleeve.

"Make believe you're chanting, pet. It's expected."

Latin and I were strangers, but I chanted something in a low voice so nobody would recognize the fact. My eyes went everywhere inside the ruined abbey, peering under hoods that hid faces, studying the priest and the nude woman who was the living altar for the Host.

I had made something of a study of the Black Mass since that day three weeks before when my case officer,

David Anderjanian, had told me I was about to become a devil-worshiper. I knew that the *messe noire* was a carry-over from some all-but-forgotten pagan ritual, during which the Nature gods Pan and Diana, were adored by their followers. With the coming of Christ, this ritual took a new turn. For Pan and Diana, read the Devil.

In the early Dark Ages, when life for most men and women of Europe had been a hell on Earth, when the only people who counted were churchmen or nobility and warriors, the serfs turned away from a God that seemed to have deserted them, and gave their affections to His rival, instead.

The sabbats of the witches, the *messe noire*, the mass of St. Secaire, were both entertainments and adorations. To the peasant, aching from his daytime labors in the fields, the night brought enchantment, at the sabbat or the Black Mass. He could release the frustrations of his daily life with the daughter or wife of a neighbor, who was taking his own wife or daughter in the orgiastic rites that attended the worship of the Devil.

A cry broke the train of my thoughts.

The priest was bending over the naked girl, bestowing the blasphemous kiss upon her body. I watched the red-head writhe and twist as she uttered demented little cries. She was under the influence of a drug that made her quiescent, yet which aroused the animal lusts of her body at the same time.

The acolytes trembled, watching the caress. The on-lookers swayed, moaning, their desires stimulated both by sight of the nude woman and by the kisses placed between her parted thighs by the celebrant. She groaned, her hips rose and fell, her pale white legs moved apart and then together.

"Are you sure you can take all this?"

Kenneth Derwent was beside me, solicitous for my welfare. I breathed back, "This isn't exactly my bag, but I won't make waves. Relax, Ken. You've done your duty, sneaking me in here. The rest is up to yours truly."

His face under the woolen hood was anxious. He smiled slightly when he caught my nod. I am a mod chick, I dig an orgy every once in a while, especially in the line of duty. I would not disgrace my fellow L.U.S.T. members.

The chanting grew stronger in tone, but now the congregation was getting into the spirit of the thing, I could make out bodies swaying closer and closer together, and hands that were dipping out of sight inside the heavy woolen cloaks that hid the nakedness of cult members.

David Anderjanian had warned me. . . .

"We've stumbled onto a damn clever scheme, Eve, one so clever that we're amazed nobody ever thought of it before. You know all those cults they have in California?"

"The religious nuts, the sun worshipers, the fun and games gang, all the kinky outfits. Yeah, I've heard of them. A bunch of kooks!"

"Would you ever think to investigate them?"

"Me, I'm a liberal. Let them have their kicks."

David Anderjanian grinned at me triumphantly. He is a huge Viking of a man, six feet four and with muscles to match, blond hair and sun-tanned skin. I believe he might make good husband material, but I've never been able to lead him to an altar. Except maybe one in a ruined abbey chapel where a *messe noire* was being celebrated.

"It makes a perfect cover, doesn't it?" David asked.

"A perfect cover . . . oh!"

I thought a minute. In our business, which is that of catching and killing enemy spies and agents when neces-

sary, a 'cover' is a kind of disguise that protects a secret agent from discovery. My cover at the moment was that of lady sociologist, studying the customs and manners of my English fellows. Kenneth Derwent, as a lawyer for the Royal Order of Satanic Societies, was in a position to get me invited to a real live Black Mass, where I was to contact a man named Brian Evans.

When David Anderjanian told me about the cults in California and how one of them was suspected of being a camouflage for some international dirty work, I knew damn well he could be right. We Americans are a live-and-let-live kind of people. If it's your bag, then enjoy it, so long as you don't hurt anybody else.

Foreign secret agents are well aware of this *laissez-faire* attitude. So one of them had organized a cult all his own, and named it the Beatific Association of Devil-worshippers, with allied branches in England and in Paris. From the L.U.S.T. agent who had penetrated its ranks, David and I learned that the people were harmless for the most part, but there were a few who were not so harmless.

It was these few who were the spies and secret agents.

We had no proof. We did not even know who they were, really. My job was to be in England, maybe even go on to Paris, with the idea of learning who the master minds behind B.A.D. might be.

They had a way of exchanging information that our agents in Uncle Sam country had not been able to decipher. This, too, was part of my job. . . .

A hand slithered up my leg, caressing it with gentle warmth. I shivered, forgetting the Beatific Association of Devil-worshippers. That palm and those trembling fingers were moving past my knee and along my inner thigh.

"Cut it, Ken," I murmured.

To my surprise, he was five feet away, rubbing shanks with a dame in a white woolen cloak. I turned, ready to slap a face, when the notion came to me that this was what the young man behind me was supposed to do, in order to worship the devil.

I changed the direction and force of my rising hand away from his cheek to his quivering lips. Instead of slapping him, I trailed my fingernails across his mouth.

I breathed, "Do you like to kiss a girl?"

He was about twenty. I wondered how in hell he had received an invite to these demonolotry rites. His face was flushed, his eyes glassy. I decided I was pretty lucky to have found him as a companion in carnality. He would be totally engrossed in his own libido; he would scarcely notice what I was doing.

"Love it, pet, love anything to do with you."

He crowded up behind me so that I could feel the size and strength of his young manhood. His arms went around me, his hands began fumbling at the opening of my woolen robe.

"Let's not jump the gun," I whispered.

"No, ducks. But let me pet you."

I could see no harm in that. Besides, his delicate young fingers were sliding around on my belly, tickling my navel. I did a little quivering myself, pressing back into his excitement with my behind.

The hymn to Satan was sounding now, rolling across the barren flatlands of Exmoor like a sacrilegious tidal wave, even as the priest was tolling the bell nine times, and turning counter-clockwise. My young companion was holding my breasts in his hands, shaking them to the bongings of the bronze bell.

Now the priest was lifting the Sword of Power, aiming it

at the living altar or naked redhead, and began intoning the Invocation to Satan. Behind me, I felt my robe being lifted, felt the naked thighs and something else of the young worshiper touching my somewhat heated flesh

“You’re my kind of altar, ducks,” he breathed

The Chalice of Ecstasy was being raised, filled with wine and drained by the celebrant. To one side of him an acolyte was shaking the silver phallus she held at the four cardinal points of the compass. The young man celebrating his own kind of *messe noire* was kneeling, kissing my femininity in a parody of what the defrocked priest was doing.

“This is my chalice,” he whispered.

Glancing down, I decided to play my own kind of acolyte. I too grasped a phallus and shook it north and south, east and west. The young man moaned.

The priest was chanting again.

“By Astaroth and Mammon, Abaddon and Asmodeus, by Io, Zata, Cailo and Abbata, I conjure thee, great Satan!”

The roll call of demons continued. The acolyte on the right was hitting the brass gong hanging on a tripod, sending out its reverberations to echo each of the demoniac names. The audience was chanting those names also, calling on Satan to hear and to appear.

I could smell musk and incense.

Then I heard the wail of the pipes of Pan being played somewhere in the darkness. It was an eerie sound those pipes made, a sound that went backward into Time for many thousands of years, and touched some primitive chord in every one of us who heard it.

Now came the conjuration of Lust, as the priest cast off

his lone garment and moved forward toward the redhead priestess. Her sharp cry of happiness showed that he was possessing her female flesh. The congregation quivered as one, I heard women wailing softly and men grunting as they responded to that satyresque sight. On and on went the priest to the rhythmic adulation of the pallid hips that held him.

He drew away. The audience was roused indeed, by that conjuration. Everywhere I looked, men were clutched to women, and some of them were halting just short of actual union only by the exercise of iron will power.

The mass was nearing its conclusion.

The priest was lifting the chalice from its position on the white belly of the redhead. In a few moments he would be distributing this blasphemous communion to the congregation. I had to think pretty fast. When the orgy started—as it would soon enough after that communion—I had to be ready to make my play.

One of the congregation was a fellow L.U.S.T. member.

I did not know Brian Evans, but I had been sent post haste from London to contact him here. He would tell me what he had learned about B.A.D. during the few months he had had it under surveillance. Working in cooperation with him, I was supposed to learn the names of the B.A.D. agents in California, and relay the information back to David Anderjanian.

The smooth palms of the youth were sliding up my rib cage, just below the beginning slopes of my breasts as he rose to his feet. They were knowledgeable palms, they stroked the fires under my flesh until I could feel my nipples getting big. Now his hands were cupping my swelling breasts, shaking them up and down once more.

I giggled, "Going for a milk shake, honey?"

“That I am, ducks. Love that taste.”

The priest was turning, the chalice in his left hand, a black host in the other. He was intoning more Latin words in his deep voice, an obscene play on the Latin of the orthodox Mass. The worshipers were shuffling forward; each of them would swallow that offering.

My researches had informed me that the black host at the *messe noire* was thorn’s apple—datura—and a smidgen of Spanish Fly. The datura relaxed your inhibitions, made you want to dance about and sing, the cantharides did the rest, by giving your libido a powerful nudge.

“Walk like this,” my lover groaned.

Well, what the hell. We weren’t the only ones coupling as they approached the altar where the naked redhead lay. I even saw one or two robes lifted so that their joining could be more precise. The naked female hips, the moving loins of the man behind her, added a touch of erotica that my own id found most welcome.

Lover-boy was jutting between my thighs, making rubbing movements that were driving me out of my skull. I hunched forward, moving with bent legs, my back bowed over before him.

I lifted my tongue toward the priest. He glanced at me, blinked, and dropped the host he held. He glanced down into the chalice, fumbled inside it, and brought out another host, one that had a little red dot on it. I took it into my mouth, began chewing as the priest served the youth behind me.

A hand lifted my robe, displaying my hips and buttocks and my slim white legs to the onlookers. I felt my lover hunch forward, felt his manhood sliding, entering. He gave a soft little cry as his hips went wild.

I took a few steps, hunting for dark shadows and some

privacy. The thought entered my mind that this might be Brian Evans taking me in the *Venus reversa* position. If so, he wanted solitude just as much as I did.

We had gone about twenty feet before that surging delight between my thighs told me I was never going to make anything more private than the eroded flagstones over which I was crouched.

Without disturbing my young lover, I went downward, landing on hands and knees. With a grunt, the youth knelt behind me and slid his hands under my belly to grab my dangling breasts. His hips surged forward and backward.

The Spanish Fly was getting to us both by this time and he became a dildling demon. His hips rammed and dipped, swung and looped. His breath was like a creaky bellows. His hands were under me, finding my dangling breasts and stroking them, discovering my hardened nipples and tugging them while rotating them between his forefingers and thumbs.

All around us soft cries and muffled moanings were making a satyresque symphony in the old chapel. Before me I saw a woman of thirty crouched with her ass on a fallen pillar while a man knelt before her yawning thighs to give her the same devil kiss that the celebrant had bestowed on the redhead. This woman was staring blindly at the moon, head fallen backward, her belly heaving and her thighs closing and opening slowly.

To her right a man and a woman, both naked, were standing, performing in the *el keurchi* posture of the Arabs. Feminine buttocks flapped crazily as the woman hunched and jammed her hips. Just behind the seated woman another couple were going at it hot and heavy with the woman flat on her back in the succubus position.

I couldn't see any of the other worshipers.

I told myself I ought to disengage from my lover in order to find Brian Evans. But the pleasure he was feeding my femininity was so overpowering I couldn't bear to break away.

David Anderjanian would have taken a dim view of all this. Not that he is any great shakes as a moralist but he does have a strong sense of duty and insists that I feel the same way. Unfortunately for my image as a secret agent, I just couldn't. My lover had pushed me too far along the line of no return.

I began working my vaginal muscles all along his intruding flesh. In sophisticated jargon, I am a nutcracker expert. A knowing Frenchman would name me *casse-noisette*. Your North African wench who can milk with her privacy is greatly honored, and is known as *gebbadzeh*.

My boy friend was gasping, both hands digging their fingers into my hanging breasts, adding a little pain to my pussycat pleasure. He was about to sling his jelly, as the slang world puts it. I helped him along with some side-to-side movements of my backside. He let out a yowl and collapsed on top of me.

He had fainted from the violence of his orgasm, I discovered when I pulled free, and lay there like a dead man. I had intended to make an inspection of the abbey chapel with him, to try and locate Brian Evans, but one glance told me he was a pooped-out playmate.

I made it to my feet, staring at the convulsing woman having a fit as the man kneeling before her performed his act of adoration. I watched her slide backward off the fallen pillar in a dead faint.

"What a bloody let-down," the man growled.

His date had folded up on him as had my own lover. I ran over to him, touched him on his muscular shoulder.

His eyes gleamed as he ran them upward from my bare ankles.

"Hello, pet. Ever see such rotten luck?"

"Sure. Look at my friend."

My thumb jerking over my shoulder directed his eyes toward the young man who lay sleeping on the flaggings. His lips twitched into a grin. I could tell that his kisses and tonguings had only been a prelude as far as he was concerned. He was rearing to go and ready for some rantum-scantum.

"Know what I'd like to do?" I whispered.

He shook his head, his grin fading.

"Go for a ride on you," I went on, giggling. "You walk around, I'll be your passenger. I have a yen to look."

"Touch of the voyeur, eh? Well, ducks, I wouldn't mind a spot of voyeurism, myself. How will you come aboard?"

My hand pushed him to a sitting position on the pillar, right alongside his collapsed companion. I lifted a leg, straddled his hips and sat down on him slowly. His lips writhed back and his eyes glazed as he felt me taking him all in.

Of course, this was only an excuse to find Brian Evans. I couldn't very well parade around the orgy all by my lonesome. I had to have an excuse. In the *janu-kuru-utthitha-bandha* position of the Hindus, nobody would pay me any attention.

"I'm Ted Ahearn," he managed to get out.

"Eve Drum here, Ted. Now, on your feet!"

His big hands slid under my smooth buttocks. He heaved upward, making me cry out in rapture as he made it to his feet. My legs whipped up, locked together at the ankles behind his back. Ted nodded as he felt my inner

knees grip him, because it took some of my weight off him.

He started walking.

I tried not to pay too much attention to what we were doing as I ran my eyeballs this way and then the other around the congregation, most of whom were flopping about on the ground or otherwise engaged in various amorous acts. I had been told that Brian Evans was a solidly built man, with blond hair and a habit of squinting when not wearing glasses.

Since nobody was wearing glasses at these devotions to the devil, I hunted for a man who squinted. I didn't see any, though I saw a lot of other things.

Everybody was in on the act now. The priest and the redhead, both naked, were banging away at each other, the woman flopping about on the marble altar top and yelling fit to bust a gut with delight. I gathered that she had come out of her drug-induced swoon with a vengeance.

A trio of two women and one man were tangled up almost at the base of the altar, the man crouched down over one woman as the other hunkered down above the upturned face of the recumbent pussycat. They were steadily moving, moving, while the man kissed the kneeling girl with open mouth. I wondered where the extra girl's escort was, then found him stretched out on top of two women, giving them both a good time.

My mount was breathing more quickly. But me! Well, I was getting sleepy, believe it or not! My eyelids felt like manhole covers, and I kept yawning though my walking wriggler did his best to keep me interested.

I tightened my arms about his neck and lowered my head to his shoulder. I started to snooze right there and

then, knowing something was definitely wrong about all this, but not caring a damn, one way or the other. I was just too plain tired.

"Hey," growled my mount. "Are you sleeping on me, ducks?"

"Course not," I mumbled, snuggling closer.

"My god, nothing like this has ever happened to old Teddy boy," he said in a dazed voice. "My bird has gone to sleep."

I was asleep, too. I had a vague notion of sliding down his front, of hearing his rasp curses as I landed in a ball at his bare toes. I curled up and began to snore. Only dimly did I remember the black host with the red spot on it, and I realized I'd been drugged.

I honestly didn't care. I was drifting off to sleep. . . .

I woke to the touch of cold, damp fog rolling in across the moors. I was shivering, lying naked on the abbey flaggings. The shadows were dimmer now, not so starkly clear, because the mist was thick and hid the moon. I made it to my feet, stood shivering.

The ruins were deserted. Gone were the celebrants, both men and women. The priest and the redhead were nowhere around. And Kenneth Derwent? What about him? He had been my date, more or less. I'd come to the Black Mass in his Sprite. The bastard had left me here.

My feet carried me past a couple of broken stone arches and the flagstones where thick weeds grew. This was a cold, lonely spot. The night was all around me, with no candles gleaming and no light anywhere except from the faint radiance of the moon, and that was diffused by the clouds and the fog.

I could see twenty feet ahead of me, but no more.

"Is anybody here? Anybody at all?" I called.

I walked on, remembering that my clothes were in the back seat of the Sprite, which was by now, in all probability, well on its way to London. Then I remembered my woolen cloak. It might still be where I'd dropped it when the young man had taken me in the *Venus reversa* posture.

Somebody had tumbled to my secret agent status. But why leave me here, alive? Surely they should have killed me. I moved like a sleepwalker with my hands out in front of my face. What with the heavy fog and the skeleton arches and pillars of the abandoned monastery chapel, I felt like an alien in an alien world. There was no sound, except the drip of water. Even my slippers feet moved silently.

Then I heard the groan.

I turned and stared through the mist. "Who is it?"

Even as I spoke the thought touched my mind that I might be ten kinds of a damn fool. Maybe the Beatific Association of Devil-worshipers members were still hanging around, waiting to kill me.

I moved forward hurriedly, away from there. I had traveled about fifty feet when my foot struck something soft and I pitched headlong over a body to land with a thump on the hard, mist-wet paving stones. I turned on the ground, not wanting to be caught with my back to danger.

The man who lay there so limply in the mist was not quite dead. I could see his lips quivering as he tried to speak. I scrambled forward, leaned my head over his. Up this close, I could see his eyes squinting as he sought to make me out.

"Brian Evans? I'm Eve Drum," I panted.

"Diary," he whispered.

His right hand lifted and something fell out of it to clink

on the flaggings. I ignored it to whisper, "Which one killed you?"

His lips quivered, then stilled. I put my hand on his chest. No heartbeat. My fingertips fumbled for his wrist. No pulse. My L.U.S.T. compatriot was dead.

If those B.A.D. boys had killed Brian Evans, they would kill me just as willingly. I wondered why I wasn't dead already. I fumbled about on the flagstones until I found the tiny key he had dropped. I wrapped my fist around it and got to my feet. I had to get the hell out of this old chapel and fast.

I started my search for my fallen robe, knowing that without it I could very easily freeze to death on these moors, or at best catch my death of pneumonia. After ten minutes of frantic looking and hissed curses, I discovered it lying in a heap where I had shrugged out of it. I slid into it fast.

I knew roughly that I was somewhere on that broad expanse of barren land known as Exmoor, about ten miles southeast of Dunkery Beacon. I told myself ten miles was not so far to walk, so I set out across the moors.

The moors of England are vast rolling wastelands, usually treeless and covered with heather and bracken. Of the three moors on this peninsula Exmoor is the most beautiful, I have been told. Dartmoor is a barren wilderness, as is Bodmin Moor. Lovely valleys and little, winding streams turn Exmoor into a fertile countryside. You see no granite outcroppings, and while there are very few trees, in the daytime Exmoor is an expanse of purple-blossomed heather where wild ponies run.

By sunlight, Exmoor may be pretty; but by night, and with a fog rolling in off Bristol Channel, it is a pretty scary place. Those abbey ruins and the empty altar where

the Black Mass had been celebrated, and where the wind moaned now as it swept the mist into eddying grey whirlpools, sent eerie chills down my spine.

I slipped and stumbled my way through the fog, alone in a world where there was apparently no other life. I believe I would have welcomed the sound of a wild pony galloping nearby, but they were too smart to be out on a night like this, when hobgoblins seemed likely to be up and about.

Underfoot the heather and the bracken tickled my bare ankles, sprinkling them with condensed droplets of mist. If I had not found my woolen robe before I left the abbey ruins, I think I would have died, wandering across this moor.

I stumbled on for long, agonizing minutes that became half an hour, and then an hour. The realization came to me that I might be walking in circles, and the thought touched my mind that I might wander like this for days if the fog kept up, and even starve to death before rescue came.

I never did know how long I had walked before the man loomed up out of the mists. Distance is a tricky thing on the moors, with a thick fog roiling in the wind. One moment I was slipping and staggering along, the next there was a man in front of me, in heavy coat and trousers, with a rifle in his hands.

His eyes popped on seeing me, and the rifle came up.

As a L.U.S.T. agent, I have been trained to react swiftly. Even as he was bringing up the rifle, my hands shot out and closed down on barrel and stock. I did not intend to wrestle him for the gun, I just wanted to use it as a lever.

As my fingers tightened, I dropped backward.

The man was caught by surprise. The rifle went down-

ward with me, and he lurched forward. My right foot came up, planted itself in his middle and I drove him upward through the air. He landed behind me a few feet, minus the Enfield.

I whirled—the sharp underbrush hurt my bare knees when I turned—and lifted the rifle in my hands. The man was just getting up. When he saw I had the Enfield, his face went a sickly green and he lifted his right hand, palm up.

“Easy now, ducks. No call to shoot.”

I knew him, I had seen him at the abbey, he was one of the celebrants of the Black Mass. He had been coming back to finish me off, I guessed. “Damn your eyes, why’d you kill Brian Evans?”

His face crumpled. I think he had aimed to trick me—say, by pretending to be a lonely hunter out for one of the red deer that frequent this corner of Exmoor at night. I had shaken him by revealing that I was aware of his little scheme.

“Now, now,” he said.

“I ought to shoot you,” I snarled. “Go on, turn around. Fast!”

He turned, but he kept his eyes on the mists as if searching for a companion who might come striding up to take command of the sticky situation. I had intended to search him, but I decided to let him search himself.

“Strip!” I rasped.

“Long now, pet—”

“Do you want a bullet in the back of the knee? I’ll leave you here that way, if you don’t do as I say. Strip, damn you!”

He shrugged out of his overcoat.

“Turn out the pockets, then toss it behind you.”

I searched the overcoat and then the tweed jacket and the Saville Row trousers he tossed back over a shoulder at me. In the left pocket of the trousers I found a little notebook and some keys. I shoved them into the capacious pocket of my robe.

"I'll leave you your underwear, I'm taking your outer clothes along with me—just to make sure you don't go running too fast through this damn wilderness."

I was about to swing around and walk off. It was then that I heard the branch break. Without stopping to think I threw myself at the ground, whirling in midair so I could look behind me.

At the same instant the man in his underwear turned and came for me, unfortunately for him. Because the one who'd broken that dry branch had his rifle up and was squeezing the trigger. My action had been so swift, he had not reacted to it, so he fired at where I had been.

The man in the underwear stopped short in his headlong leap for me. The bullet caught him flush in the chest so that he landed on the ground just beyond me, stone dead.

The Enfield was in my hands. I put its muzzle toward the living man and squeezed off three shots, rapid fire. The black holes spoiled the rifleman's topcoat. He stood there with his rifle in his hands, staring down at me in sheer disbelief. He staggered, then, and his eyes blinked. I think he was paralyzed with shock, because he appeared to be trying to lift the rifle he held, and could not.

With a faint sigh he turned sideways as his left leg buckled under him. He rolled over when he landed on the ground, and shuddered. Then he was quiet.

Me, I waited. The night was still, the moon was a silver orb up there as the clouds parted and the mists seemed to

be blowing away. If there were any more of these characters around, I wanted to know it.

I started walking in the direction from which my attackers had come. I reasoned that they had not walked here all the way from Luccombe or even from Selworthy. There was a car parked somewhere in these mists. I also reasoned that, for some reason, these two had been assigned to return to the abbey chapel and finish me off.

I was assuming that they had put poison into Brian Evans' black host, as they had put a sleeping draught in mine. There had been too many witnesses to gun me down at the black mass; they had left me sleeping quietly—telling possible witnesses, perhaps, that Brian Evans was sleeping off the orgy too. They had wanted to pump bullets into my girl-girl shape.

I felt no remorse. It is kill or be killed in my game, and the one with the fastest reflexes usually comes out alive.

I had searched the second man before abandoning his corpse, and I took along both rifles plus the spare ammunition the killers had carried on their persons. Later I intended to wipe them clean of all fingerprints and throw them away at widely spaced intervals.

I trudged for half a mile before I came to a highway.

The car had to be here, somewhere. I gambled and turned right. The macadam road made for easier walking, so in about ten minutes I spotted a little Austin pulled off to the side of the road.

One of the keys in the key-ring I'd taken from dead man number one fitted the ignition lock. I inserted and turned it. The motor throbbed to life. I sank back against the seat and closed my eyes in utter delight. I was through walking for the evening. From now on, I rode in solid comfort.

I drove through Porlock, Minehead and Dunster, then hit the long straightaway to Bridgewater and Glastonbury. The petrol tank was full up, the car was reasonably new, so I figured I would reach London my midday, tomorrow.

Once in London, I had to learn what 'the diary' was. But—how?

CHAPTER TWO

I was staying at the Grosvenor House, a huge complex facing Hyde Park, on Park Lane. I parked the Austin on Park Street and went into the hotel via the back entrance. The big lobby with its engraved glass screens was almost empty at this hour of the day, but I ran my eyes over the casual sitters and strollers to see if there were any more B.A.D. boys after me.

The desk clerk handed me my key and I was on my way to a shower and a long sleep. The diary, I told myself, could wait. I was bushed.

I was in the middle of a dream about the devil and poor little me on top of an altar in Grand Central Station when there was a knock on my door. I groaned and turned over. It was dark outside my windows, I learned by lifting a single eyelid. The traveler's clock on the night table told me it was almost midnight.

My hand threw back the covers. I had slept in transparent baby doll pajamas and pink nylon bikini panties. I made my hand reach for the robe thrown over the back of a chair.

“Coming,” I mumbled.

A young man with wide shoulders and a big grin stood in the hall. He let his blue eyes widen as he took me in from red-nailed toes to my somewhat frizzy blonde hair, while he showed me his identity wallet. “I’m Dennis Keller. I’m here to give you a hand. We heard about Evans, poor devil. It’s a marvel to me you’re still alive.”

“Come on in,” I mumbled, and walked away.

He closed and locked the door behind him.

I sat on the bed and yawned. He seated his six foot frame on the edge of a chair and beamed at me.

"Somebody slipped up, eh?" he asked conversationally. "Somebody knew you were with L.U.S.T.? Mind telling me about it?"

So I told him. He made notes on an expensive notepad bound in leather, nodding from time to time. When I was done he snapped the notebook shut and looked grim.

"I'll get the bunch to search for those two dead men, we may be able to identify them. No wonder they sent you over here, ducks. You're a whirlwind in mini-skirts. I've been glued to the radio but I haven't heard a word about those men you killed. The moors are a bit lonely, you know. Probably haven't been found yet."

I showed him the little key I had taken from Brian Evans, and told him again about the diary he had mentioned. Dennis Keller studied the key, nodding after a moment.

"I'm sure I recognize it, it's a key to a baggage rental locker. I'll lay you two to one Evans ditched the diary in that locker, and this key will get it for us." He flushed with sudden excitement, and rose to his feet. "Are you game to go for it now, ducks?"

"Why not? I'll never go back to sleep."

I pushed him out into the hall so I could get dressed. I decided on a little number I'd picked up at Paraphernalia in New York, a white linen Indian pants-and-blouse affair with a Navaho disc belt. The long nylon fringes along the pants legs and sleeves did not make for fighting garb, but it was eye-catching, I must admit.

We grabbed a taxi at the stand just outside the hotel door on Park Street. "Paddington Station," Dennis said as

he sank back beside me. He said to me, "There are a lot of those lockers there. I'll lay two to one that that key will open one."

The black taxi braked to a stop on Eastbourne Terrace. Moments later we were walking toward locker #11, the same number that was engraved on the little key. Dennis did the honors, inserting the key and turning it.

There was a small carryall—one of those bags dispensed by air lines to their first-class ticket holders—inside the locker. Dennis muttered under his breath and lifted it out. He slid back the zipper. There was a diary inside, a hard-cover book with *Diary* scripted across its red imitation-leather face in gold lettering. Dennis ruffled the pages, face grim.

"It's been written in, all right. I just hope he learned enough before they got him to help us."

I crossed my fingers.

Back in the taxi, Dennis Keller wanted to know if I would take the diary, or did I want him to bring it back to L.U.S.T. London headquarters.

"Let me have it," I told him. "I'll give it a fast reading see what I can learn. I'll drop in to see you later today, about three in the afternoon."

I had the carryall in my hand as I went back into the Grosvenor. I was anxious to learn what Brian Evans had discovered. My whole assignment might depend on what a dead man had written in the diary that weighed down the air-lines bag.

I showered, changed into my baby dolls, fluffed up a couple of pillows and sat in bed to read. The script was almost scholarly, classic in its formation of words. I gathered that Brian Evans had been something of a pedant in his time.

"Met Jerome Mallinson today, brought the conversation around to witches, scoffing at covens and such, which M. defended as really existing. Invited me to attend a meeting at Chipping Norton. Happy to accept, feel I am getting a toe in the door that may lead to an important discovery."

I read rapidly through several pages of closely written script. The witches' coven at Chipping Norton had been a decided success, apparently. Evans had met two men—a James Macklin and a Quentin Plover—as well as a witch named Marion Begley, who were also devil worshipers. Marion Begley owned a little import-export store along Carnaby Street in London, from which she supplied various occult objects to fellow witches and devil-worshipers in Paris, Rome and Los Angeles.

"I suspect it is through the sale and/or trade of these 'sacred swords' and ceremonial chalices that these cults manage to pass on the information they gather about the defences of the United States and Britain to the Russians. I am certain Mallinson knows nothing of this: I chanced to overhear a few ill-chosen words both by Macklin and Plover that put me on to them."

There were several more paragraphs. Then:

"There is a silversmith named Avery Taunton living in High Wycombe who does the engraving work for these people. I am positive he has been given a plan of the hush-hush underground anti-ballistic missiles system with which the United States hopes to counteract any nuclear attack by Russia or Red China. These underground ABM

systems are not known even to the general public in America. Taunton is to engrave them on what I believe is a pyx, a kind of chalice in which priests and ministers keep the Host for saying Mass. I was fortunate enough to overhear Macklin and Plover discussing this.

"I believe the object is a pyx, that is. My ears were not oversharpen at the time, and Macklin was speaking in a very low voice. But these witches and demonolators do use pyxes and chalices in their unholy rites, and have them for export and sale to other countries where similar cults are flourishing.

"The plan is to ship the pyx, once it is engraved, on to Paris where a small private plane will fly it to Prague. My job, and that of this Eve Drum whom I am to meet on Exmoor in a few days, is to prevent this from happening.

"I expect to learn more particulars about these pyxes at that meeting of devil worshipers. I intend to tell Miss Drum these facts once I have met up with her at the ruined abbey where the Black Mass is to be celebrated.

"We shall need proof, of course. By traveling to High Wycombe and stealing this chalice, we shall have that proof. The engravings on it will relate to the underground anti-ballistic missiles system and be the final convincer."

I put down the diary. Poor Brian Evans! He had not met me; instead, he had met death at the Black Mass. The least I could do was carry on for him.

A silversmith named Taunton, living in High Wycombe.

All I had to do was rob him of a chalice he was engraving, turn it over to the L.U.S.T. people here in London, and be on my way. It didn't sound like a tough job. I

would become Penelope Courage, girl safe-cracker extraordinary for a few hours, that was all.

Next afternoon I put on a black nylon jump suit under which there was only little old nude me. Over it I wore my Lady Windsor raincoat. I carried my burglar tools and my pearl-handled Belgian Bulldog revolver in my belted Marlene shoulder bag. London L.U.S.T. had very thoughtfully provided me with a rented Triumph 1200.

I wheeled out into the London traffic, heading past Hyde Park Corner and along Kensington Road, proceeding along Kensington High Street passing Holland Park and then along Hammersmith Road.

In about an hour I was well beyond the city limits. In the old days, Hyde Park Corner was about the westernmost part of the city. But since the first half of the nineteenth century London had grown and its traffic right along with it. I was not in any especial hurry, I would not be able to go to work before dark-time. My plan called for lunch at Hurley at the Bell Inn which dates from the twelfth century, when it was a monastery guest house.

So I went by way of Bath Road and through Maidenhead Thicket, where my guidebook told me highwaymen used to rob travelers. I took the right-hand turn and moseyed along through some wooded country. On top of Appletree Hill, I parked the Triumph and got out to admire the view of the Thames Valley.

Half an hour later I was eating Yorkshire pudding, roast beef and a raspberry trifle, enjoying every mouthful of it. A couple of young executive types tried to pick me up, and while I was friendly about it, I chased them off, wondering what they would say if they knew I had a burglar kit and a loaded revolver in my shoulder purse.

Along High Street in Great Marlow I was honestly

tempted to stop and have a go at a bit of shopping, but the clock in the Town Hall told me I had no time to spare. After all, once I arrived in High Wycombe, I had to find the shop where Avery Taunton did his silversmithing and discover how to break into it as quietly as possible.

From Marlow, High Wycombe is five miles by the north road. I got a look at Windsor Castle at the top of the hill midway between both places. The rest of the way was all downhill, and I pulled into the center of town a little before six. I got out and went into a tobacconist's. I asked where Avery Taunton had his shop.

"Too bad, miss. He's closed by this time," the stout lady behind the counter told me, after I'd bought a pack of cigarettes.

I let my face register dismay, but inwardly I was delighted. I said, "Oh, that is too bad. I've an old piece of Sheffield silver I wanted him to look at, to see if it was worth resilvering."

"You'll 'ave to wait until tomorrow, miss. Just go down past the Guildhall a few blocks, make a right hand turn onto Wye. You'll find him about three, four blocks down. He's still in the old town."

I thanked her, nodded and waved, and went out to the Triumph. I drove as she had directed me, past the Guildhall located at the crossroads at the top of High Street. Almost opposite the Guildhall is the Red Lion Inn, where I decided to have dinner.

I went past the silversmith shop slowly. It was fronted by two leaded windows and a sign with a painted pyx of delicate workmanship, illustrative of the arts. The door was wood, with a lock that didn't look too difficult to open. Still, I would be out on the street and in full view of any passer-by if I did that. I had to put off casing the back

part of the shop until after dinner, when it would be dark.

There was a little alley beside the shop before which was a small wooden gate. That alleyway would take me to the back door, if there was any. If not a door, then maybe a window, I reflected.

I swung around close by the river and headed back.

I asked at the Red Lion Inn if they could put me up for the night. They could, and would, the clerk assured me, beaming as he swung the registry book around. I scrawled 'Penelope Courage' on the line.

The clerk raised his eyes. "Any relation to the beer people, ma'am?"

"Only a cousin," I told him.

The room I was to sleep in was on the third floor, overlooking the back yard. Not far away was an iron stairway and a drop ladder to be used in case of fire. I could reach it by stepping onto the sill of a window and stretching, I found. I had a way in and out without attracting too much attention, I hoped.

I had a little valise in the trunk of the Triumph. It held my nightie and toiletries, plus a brown taffeta shirt dress which I could wear to dinner.

I feasted on lamb curry, slowly and with quite evident relish, because the waiter was beaming at me. I was just killing time and this was the best way I knew to go about it. When I left the dining room it was almost nine, and dark outside.

My stretching body made the hem of the shirt dress climb almost to my buttocks, which impressed my presence on half-a-dozen men who could not get enough of eyeing my legs. They say there is a language of legs. My legs were trying to tell everybody I was ready for beddy-

bye. I even staggered a little and grabbed hold of a man as if to save myself from falling.

"Ooooooh, I'm sorry," I whispered up into his face.

"Dear girl, you should be asleep, I think."

"In fifteen minutes," I smiled, crossing my protuberant left breast with a fingertip, "cross my heart or hope to die."

In my room, I slithered out of the dress and into the black nylon jump suit. There was a hood and a mask I could wear with it. I got everything on, fitted my burglar kit into a black leather belt that had sockets for each tool, and was on my way. I would have liked to take along my Belgian Bulldog, but its pearl handles would have shown up.

At quarter to midnight, I stepped out onto the windowsill and swung over onto the fire escape. The old town was deserted at this time of night. I went down the iron treads on cat feet and dropped from the ladder to the ground. I ran into the shadows.

I had to wait until the street was empty of cars before I dared run across it and into some shadows on the far side. I waited for a yell or two to sound from the Red Lion, but all the guests and employees were either asleep or too busy to be looking out windows. I ran past the Guildhall, skirting its bricks and its stone dressings supported by light stone arches. I ran along the bushes on Wye Street.

It seemed forever before I turned in at the little white gate and moved along the alleyway, but it could not have been more than five minutes from the Guildhall. This was a business section, all the workers had gone home, so I felt reasonably safe as I turned the corner and found myself facing the back door of the silversmith shop. There were no windows.

I slid into the recess and checked the lock. It was not too complicated a lock, I think it was a Chubb. I slid out a slender lockpick and bent.

In less than a minute, the door swung inward very slowly while I held my breath waiting for a burglar alarm to sound. No alarm, just shadows and the moonlight forming geometrical patterns on the floor. I moved forward.

This rear area of the shop was a workplace, where Avery Taunton silvered worn pieces and made repairs to broken candlebra. There were tools scattered along a wooden counter built into the wall. There was a small desk, and a chair. Between the display shop and workshop stood a high bookcase crammed with silver *objets d'art*. Silver, porcelain, fancy dishes, stuff like that.

I went into the store proper and began my search for a pyx. I couldn't find one, no matter how high and low I looked. There were no liturgical instruments anywhere. I moved back into the workshop to continue my search there. No luck.

Brian Evans had been running in bad luck, all around. It appeared that I had inherited this macabre mantle. The B.A.D. boys had shipped the pyx off to Paris.

I turned to the desk, began my hunt. There just might be some sort of memorandum that would tell me where in Paris the pyx had been sent. After half an hour I found a parcel post receipt for shipment yesterday to Paris of an unmentioned object. It could be the pyx, it was all I had to go on.

I copied down the name. *Siccard et Cie.* 113-A rue Chenier, Paris, France. This would be my next port of call.

I put everything neatly back into place and stayed to

give the place the once-over. Nothing showed that I had been here at all. I backpedaled out the door and made sure it was locked behind me. Then I beat feet for the Red Lion Inn.

A fishline tied to a lead sinker enabled me to drag the retractable ladder down far enough so I could grab hold of it and climb up onto the fire escape. Seconds later I was sliding through the window into my room. I turned and put my hands on the window, pulling it down.

“Hold it right there, ducks,” said a male voice.

I remained bent over slightly, while the voice went on. “I have a Bisley here, fitted with a silencer. I’m taking dead aim on your backbone. So do be a good girl and not raise any fuss, yes?”

“You bet,” I told him.

A hand touched my buttocks, began feeling me up. Soft fingers were roaming each plump little cheek and in between.

“Nothing hidden there,” he chuckled.

“I could have told you that,” I snapped.

“Ah, but would I have believed you? No, no, ducks. Keep your hands on that windowsill. I’m not done with you yet.”

The hand reached around and unbuckled my belt, then caught it deftly as it fell. The muzzle of the Bisley rammed into my back as a warning.

“I’m going to look inside the belt. If you’re smart, you’ll stay as you are. Understood?”

He moved away, turned on a writing-table lamp to examine the contents of the belt. Burglar tools came out, to be laid neatly beside one another. “Quite a little array here,” the man said admiringly. I could see him reflected in the window glass, standing there and looking at me

every second or two when he wasn't emptying my burglar kit-belt. The revolver and its silencer were inches from his right hand.

Then he said, "Ahhh, yes." He had found the little scrap of padpaper on which I'd scribbled the name of that Paris import-export house. I watched him light a match and burn the paper. He gave me all his attention, then.

"Draw the shades, pet," he murmured. His next order caught me a little by surprise. "Now then, out of that jump suit."

I swung about to face him, pretending maidenly modesty. "But I haven't anything on under it. You got what you want. Now why don't you go away and let me alone?"

His eyebrows rose mockingly. He was a handsome-enough sort, I suppose, big in the chest and shoulder but running to flesh, and in his early thirties. I did not remember his face from the Black Mass bacchanal. He wore a wool suit and a necktie with yellow dots against a black background.

"Come now, pet. You've caused me a spot of trouble, you have. I feel I'm entitled to some sort of bonus."

Before he put a bullet in me?

Stall when Death comes looking for you, has always been my motto. I put my hands to the zipper on the back of the black nylon jump suit, and ran it down.

"How'd you know I was here?" I asked, letting the black nylon slide off a shoulder.

His eyes got bigger as my bare shoulders and the upper swells of my equally naked breasts slid into view. I let the nylon drop. My big 38s came out and bounced around. My dark nipples were stiff with terror.

He moistened his lips. "You set off an alarm, going into Avery's place, love. A silent alarm, not a noisy one. Avery

phoned me, I came over here. Oh, we knew you'd be coming. We had pictures of you—taken at the abbey when you lay unconscious and distributed among our many members—so when one of the boys telephoned that you were registered at the Red Lion here under an assumed name, I came at once."

The jump suit was at my middle, so I pushed it down until he could see my navel and the start of my girl-girl hips. He swallowed a couple of times while I posed for him.

"And now you're going to kill me," I accused.

He came out of his daze. "No, no, pet. Nothing so crude. I'll simply rope you to the bed and leave you. The chambermaid'll free you."

Believe that!

I thrust the jump suit down. My captor was making funny noises deep in his throat. His eyes ran up and down my shapely gams and halted in the blonde forest.

"On the bed, pet," he managed to croak.

"If you're going to tie me up and rape me, forget it. You can shoot me here and now." I was counting on the fact that having seen what I had to offer, he would not be able to turn his back on me and walk away. "If you want cooperation, and I can cooperate with the best of them, it has to be free arms and free legs."

"Think I'm a fool?"

I walked back and forth, letting him see my jiggling buttocks. Turning my back on him, I bent over and picked up my fallen jump suit, legs slightly apart. I heard him groan so I looked back at him between my thighs.

"Like what you see?" I giggled.

"Ducks, you'd best stop this."

"Bothers you, does it?"

"On the bed, ducks."

"No strings attached?"

"All right. No tying up. Just get there on your back."

I straightened and marched myself to the big brass bed. It looked very comfortable. If you are about to be raped, relax and enjoy it, as the saying goes. I climbed on the bed and lay on my spine, legs slightly apart.

He got undressed. Naked, he was quite a man, even if he was getting a bit of a paunch. He moved toward me, his manpart bouncing boldly. He still had the gun in his hand but he reached out to put it on the night table as he rested a knee on the mattress.

His eyes raked me hungrily. "Pet, I'm going to take my time with you. I 'aven't seen your likes in a month of Mondays."

His lips touched my knee, ran up my thigh. His hands slid around on my hips and up my smooth, naked sides. He was a big, strong man, alert and keen to my every movement. The gun was too far away for me to reach out casually for, and at my first move in that direction, I would have caught a fist on my pretty jaw.

No, thanks. That was not for me.

His lips were on my belly, open and wet, moving around. My girlish flesh reacted like paper to the flame. My hips arched and my breasts started hardening. I realized that I wasn't going to be in any condition for a quick bout of judo, not with his hands and tongue wandering about my person.

Still, there was another way.

It involved—

His lips were at my breast, his tongue licking. I moaned, my head moving back and forth. This man knew his way about a female form, I will say that. He skipped

my nipples until I started making mewling noises. Then he caught a nipple and drew it deep within his mouth.

My body rocked and shook. I have read and memorized —it being a hobby of mine—all of the great love classics of the world such as the *Bah Nameh* of the Shiek Sadiq bin Tebib el-Isfahani, the *Book of the Secret Laws of Love* by Ko Khojeh Abu Othman, the *Hermaphroditus* of Panormitanus in manuscript form, as well as dozens of others. Ovid, Aloysia Sigea, Astyanassa who wrote the *Erotic Postures*, all have contributed to my worldliness.

Right now I was more or less unable to take advantage of their accumulated wisdoms, however. I was laying myself out, not so much to please my captor but to find a way to get the hell out from under him and his gun. I dared not move my hands, which clasped two brass rods of the headboard, nor could I kick out with my feet. I had to pretend to be absolutely overcome sexually to do what needed to be done; the fact that I was having a ball down-stairs helped.

My nipples were covered with saliva, his hands were running down the outside of my thighs. Now he was leaving my rock-hard breasts, sliding himself down over my belly.

His lips kissed my flesh in the traditional Ligurian caress, burrowing until I yelped and shook. He was groaning with need himself, now. He lifted and, putting his hands beneath my behind, hoisted me upward as he lunged forward.

Me, I carried on like I was out my skull. It gave me the opportunity to wrap my naked legs about his hips and lock them at the ankles. He paid no never mind to my arms enfolding his chest. He was pumping and crying out, lost in

pleasure. He wouldn't have known if the bed had collapsed, I felt positive.

So I slid an arm off his back and wriggled a fingerpath to his thigh. My hips lurched upward, carrying him higher. I reached downward toward his appendages.

At the same time I tightened my *constrictor vaginae* muscles.

I have already mentioned that I am what the love pundits of India call *saraotastriyan*, a woman so adept at using the muscles of her female parts that she becomes a veritable nutcracker. In the inns and coffee houses of North Africa, such a woman costs three times as much as an ordinary joy girl. I applied every female muscle I had—hard.

I squeezed like a metal vise. Above me, my captor cried out in pain. Since my right hand was at his appendages, gripping them with all my strength, I could not blame him.

He shrieked. I held onto him in both places, increasing my grip. His body convulsed, he tried to pull away. His face was pale, he opened and closed his mouth like a fish for air, and sweat poured down his face.

“Oh my God—no! Stop it, stop it! You'll kill me!”

He flopped sideways. I followed him, a real clinging vine. He was in bad shape. In another moment or two he would faint. I tightened both my grips.

He bent double, shaking all over, his hands weak and ineffectual against my right forearm. He started turning blue. That was my signal to dismount and let go.

I crawled backward off the bed and stood naked, pushing back my blonde hair with both hands, trying to think. It was a few minutes past two in the morning, I had about four hours to figure out a way to get the hell out of here.

I looked around the room for the coil of thin cording he

had brought with him obviously to tie me down. I pulled his arms behind him and fastened his wrists together. Then I yanked his ankles backward so I could make wrists and ankles meet. I tied them all together.

His handkerchief I shoved in his mouth and covered that with a Pucci scarf. I sure hated to waste that scarf, it had cost me thirty bucks in Saks Fifth but I could put it on the expense account I submitted to L.U.S.T. after each assignment.

I packed my bags, donning the brown taffeta and my Lady Windsor coat. I shoved the Bisley into my overnight case along with my jump suit and burglar tools. I kept my smaller Belgian Bulldog in my raincoat pocket.

At five-thirty in the morning I went out, locked the door behind me, and walked down to the lobby. A sleepy clerk was dozing, so I didn't bother to rouse him. I laid the room key on the registry counter and tiptoed out to the Triumph.

Two minutes later I was tootling along Oxford Road out of High Wycombe and along the bank of the river Wye. Dawn was coming up over London to the east, tinting the Chiltern Hills in the distance with a pallid scarlet.

I did not need the written address of that Paris import-export store, I had it engraved on my mind. I realized that when the chambermaid walked in on my naked lover of the evening she would let out a screech and wake the whole town, before setting him free. The word would be out that Eve Drum was coming.

I could see no way out of the whole mess. The B.A.D. boys had my picture, I was damn sure they would send it on to Paris. Once the French crowd had seen me my goose would be good and cooked.

Dennis Keller came up with an idea, thank goodness. I

phoned him as soon as I crawled into my Grosvenor House room and told him what I had learned. He promised to think up ways and means while I got some shut-eye. I hung up, yanked off my dress and flopped down between the quilts.

A knock on the door roused me ten hours later. It was getting light outside the windows; evidently I had slept the clock around. I slid into a robe and padded on bare feet to answer it.

Dennis Keller stood there, grinning.

"I have the answer, pet," he assured me.

"Well, don't just stand there, come on in. What's the clever idea?"

"You're going to die."

I goggled at him.

CHAPTER THREE

He spread his hands. "We take a private plane up over the Channel, flying you to France. We bail out as the plane crashes. It's reported as a wreck by some of our boys. It makes newspaper headlines. **EVE DRUM AND FRIEND PERISH IN AIR CRASH.** Simple, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's charming, charming. It'll throw B.A.D. off the track, all right. It might also kill us both."

"Not a chance, ducks. I'm an expert pilot."

I sat on the edge of the rumpled bed. What was the difference? I had taken greater chances than that, a hundred times. So I said, "All right. We're down in the drink with a boat coming to pick us up. Then what?"

"So the boat delivers us to Boulogne. We hop into a car and ride in comfort to Paris."

"We, hey?"

Keller grinned boyishly. "I talked to your case officer a while back, after you'd told me what happened at the Red Lion. He told me to go along with you to Paris. As a confidante, a chum to watch your back trail in case of sneak attacks."

His eyes were hunting up and along my thin lisle robe. I guess he could see the way the lisle clung to my breast tips and thighs, and maybe he even saw some bare flesh where the robe gaped. He was a rugged, handsome character, I had the idea he might be able to handle himself in a scrap.

"I suppose we travel as husband and wife?" I asked darkly.

"Once we're in France, yes. It will be given out that Dennis Keller and Eve Drum died before help could reach them, for newspaper consumption. We will become Neal Kemsley and wife off on a bit of a vacation. Ey? How's it strike you?"

"I suppose you want me to wear a dark wig? And get myself a whole new kind of wardrobe? And what about nights when we register at the same hotel?"

"Everything will be on the up and up."

"Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of," I replied, staring at the bulge in his impeccably tailored Saville Row trousers. Then I laughed. They call me Oh Oh Sex at L.U.S.T. headquarters, and maybe they're right. Dennis Keller was kind of cute, in a shaggy dog sort of way. It might be fun, at that. A last meal for the condemned people. We who are to die, and that sort of thing.

"When do we leave?"

He glanced at his wristwatch. "It's almost eight. Our fellow L.U.S.T. people are buying your wardrobe. You're to be a swinger, you know. So am I. Carnaby Street garments, that sort of thing. The clothes will be delivered here, in a few hours. Meanwhile you have to eat and do any little things you'll need to do before we take off. I'll call for you in a taxi, naturally."

"All right, Dennis. I'll get ready to die."

He winked and left me to my own devices.

Four and a half hours later he was back, ringing for a bellhop to carry down my new luggage. I gave up my room, it was to look as if I was on my way to Paris for good.

"The new stuff will be put on board the Coast Guard rescue boat that will pick us out of the water. Your old

duds will be kept in safekeeping at L.U.S.T. headquarters," he told me.

The taxi got us to London Airport in something like three-quarters of an hour. Dennis lead the way to a sleek little plane where a L.U.S.T. man disguised as the taxi driver, began stowing our luggage aboard.

Take-off time was ten minutes away, so I clambered inside and settled myself in the bucket seat. Dennis slid in beside me and revved up the engine.

Half an hour later we were heading out over the Channel.

"Better slip into your parachute, Eve," Dennis warned.

Below us the Channel waters were greenish grey, showing whitecaps as the wind whipped them to a froth. Dennis kept glancing out the window and at his wristwatch.

"Ought to raise the *Pelican* pretty soon," he muttered, "but there's no sign of it and I don't fancy bobbing about in that water for any length of time."

"You and me both," I assured him.

"It's got to be soon, however—or not at all."

"You mean, we're getting close to Boulogne?"

"Right the first time."

He nodded at me, reached out and turned a couple of his instruments. I heard the motor sputter. I didn't wait for any more, my hand shot to the door, raised the latch and as the cold air hit me, I made it to my feet.

I leaned forward, telling my legs to jump. My legs gave me the Bronx cheer. I posed like an animal cracker in that open door with the wind in my face and the cold grey channel waters far below. Then Dennis acted.

He goosed me with his middle finger.

"Awwppp!" I squealed, jumping to get away from the

digging digit. I jumped right out of the plane, as a matter of fact.

Then I was going down like a hundle of bricks, so fast I could hardly get my breath. From some corner of my memory a voice told me to yank the cord and free my parachute. My hand fumbled around until it tightened on a metal ring. I yanked and the whooosh of unfolding nylon filled the air as the parachute blossomed to life behind me.

The big white mushroom overhead damn near pulled me apart when it filled with air and jerked me to a stop. I hung there in the sky and looked around. I saw the plane plunging toward the English Channel, and off to one side the figure of Dennis Keller hanging in the strings below his silk. I waved an arm. He waved back.

Then I discovered he was not waving but pointing downward. I stared at those choppy seas. Plowing through the whitecaps was a sixty-foot rescue launch.

The *Pelican* made a lovely sight. I put my fingers to my lips and blew it a kiss.

I drove into the water feet first and damn near died of the cold as the rest of my girl-girl body followed suit. Deep down I dove, all the time fighting the parachute harness. I got an arm free but by that time I was coming right under what seemed to be an acre of wet, clinging nylon, my parachute.

Hands scrabbled, feet kicked as I fought that thing. I thought it would drown me at first, so I got a little hysterical. What agents of D.R.A.G.O.N. and H.A.T.E. and other assorted bad guys had failed to do, this damn sheet was accomplishing, becoming my shroud at the doing.

I got a corner of it off and gulped in air. I saw Dennis swimming toward me, and behind him the hull of the *Peli-*

can, nosing closer. A boat was putting off from it and coming our way.

Dennis yelled encouragement, then he was on top of me, reaching for my waist and yanking me against him. "Don't fight me, pet," he panted.

His hand worked at strings and silk, and in a few seconds he had me free. I clung to him with both arms. Maybe I bawled a little too, but the seawater and the spray kept him from noticing.

The tender bumped us, hands reached down.

Then we were in the boat, being wrapped in a couple of blankets against the cold Channel wind. Grinning faces told us we had done our part of the job.

"You can change with your husband in the captain's cabin, Mrs. Kemsley," somebody said.

I gave a little jump and looked at Dennis. He winked back and grinned like an amused baboon. Oh, well. I had done a lot worse things as a L.U.S.T. lady. You get soon used to a lot of everything as a secret agent.

We went aboard on a rope ladder, me first with my sopping, sogging shift dress clinging to my rear end and upper thighs. Somebody gave a long wolf whistle and I giggled. Then hands helped me over the rail and along a heaving deck toward a cabin door. A man in a peaked cap with gold braiding on it told me that this cabin was ours for the balance of the trip.

Then I was in the room, seeing opened valises with our clothes waiting for us to get into them. I bent, grabbed the hem of the shift dress and yanked it off over my head. Dennis sighed.

I turned and looked at him over my shoulder. He was shucking out of his pants at the time and what I saw I took

to be a great compliment considering the fact that we were both cold and wet.

"Why, Dennis," I caroled. "I didn't know you cared."

"Get dressed, you witch," he growled.

I shoved down my soggy panties and escaped from the wet bra. I reached for a towel. "Mmmmm, feels good." Dennis had turned way from me, reaching for his own towel.

"I thought all our gear went down in the Channel?"

"Dennis Keller's stuff went down, so did Eve Drum's. We're Neal and Eula Kemsley, now. These are the Kemsleys' clothes scattered about."

"Eula?" I asked, eyebrows arched.

He had a strong body, heavily muscled and with long, rolling muscles. He stood naked with his behind toward me. There was suntan on his back and legs. With his mane of flaxen hair, he looked something like a Celtic earth god. I felt my breasts start to harden, and told myself to be a good girl.

He chuckled. "I never knew a Eula. I thought it might be fun." He turned his head, saw me standing doe naked. "Oh!" he said, and turned away.

I grinned. Sometimes I can be a bitch, but then, so can any woman. It was fun to tease Dennis Keller, I decided. But I grabbed up some black lace panties and slipped into them. They fit perfectly, as did the matching Warner brassiere.

Moments later I was a mod British wife.

It was dusk when the *Pelican* nosed into Boulogne harbor. Sailors ran around dropping anchor and a lifeboat. Somebody carried our luggage and dumped it into the boat.

There was a car waiting on the quay, motor idling. A

man handed the keys to Dennis as I slid into the seat of the Renault. Then we were on our way.

Our route would take us through Amiens and Chantilly on the high road to Paris. Dennis informed me that we had reservations at the Britannique on the rue Victoria. We would sleep there the rest of the night and be up for business around eight. Arrangements had been made with French L.U.S.T. to keep an eye on the little shop on the rue Chenier belonging to *Siccard et Cie.*

We were moving along a country road in Picardy. There was enough light left for me to admire the rolling plateaus and grassy valleys, despite the eighty miles an hour plus at which my 'husband' was driving. But night was too close at hand to do any sightseeing, so I curled myself up in the suicide seat and drowsed.

I woke to the blaze of electric lights and a hand opening my door. A uniformed doorman, all smiles, was bowing at the waist. I expected him to twirl his huge moustache with a Gallic air, and as I slid a shapely leg out to put my slippers foot on the sidewalk, he did just that.

I stretched, standing there, feeling very refreshed. Dennis was exhausted, judging by the rings under his eyes. I caught his arm and bounced along beside him like a dutiful, loving wife. After signing the registry and getting upstairs, Dennis collapsed on the bed. I undressed him and covered him up, just as a wife might do.

Ten hours later, we were inside an electronically geared snooper truck, marked moving van, cruising slowly along the rue Chenier. The shop belonging to *Siccard et Cie.* had been bugged by French L.U.S.T. as soon as I'd turned my information over to London L.U.S.T.

"We 'ave not learned anytheeng eemportant," the Frenchman in charge of the electronic equipment assured

us. "Just sales peetches and buyings, no more. Except for one curious leetle matter."

The young man frowned, perplexed. "Someone keeps mentioning a voodoo affair. I do not comprehend it."

"Voodoo's very big in Paris," Dennis said.

"It ties in with demon-worship in England and those kinky cults in California," I agreed.

"Maybe the transfer will be made at the voodoo ritual," Dennis said hopefully. "You know where it's at?"

The Frenchman nodded. "The rue Quercy, a couple of nights from now."

"Doesn't give us much time," I said.

"If we could only wangle an invitation."

"I 'ave a leest of names here. You may know some of them, or perhaps my supeerior does. A discreet call—*n'est ce pas?*—may do the treeck."

We listened some more, but everything seemed to be on the up and up. Of course, I didn't really expect them to go blabbing about the pyx while the shop was filled with customers, but the bugs had been placed inside the inner offices as well, and we had some hopes of those.

We held a council of war at headquarters. The bossman of the Paris branch suggested that we go to the voodoo rites and if we couldn't learn anything there, we could always go rob the store.

"I know one of the names on this invitation list," he pointed out. "I'm reasonably certain I could get you both invited." He looked at us questioningly. "Care to go?"

"Why not? I'm in the mood for some voodoo vice," I giggled.

Henri Blaye began dialing the number.

When he hung up, he assured us that his good friend in the diplomatic corps, who was also an amateur occultist,

would be happy to champion us at the voodoo ceremonies.

"I've had second thoughts," I found myself saying. "It doesn't seem right to me. My girlish instincts aren't responding."

"Go on, Eula," encouraged Dennis.

"I don't believe they'll have the pyx at the voodoo rites. It just doesn't seem logical. I see a midnight meeting at the store, where it will be turned over."

"And?" asked Henri Blaye.

"I ought to be there ahead of time to search for and find the pyx," I pointed out. "We can do the voodoo bit any-time."

Dennis Keller nodded. "All right. Eve's had a hell of a lot of experience in these matters. I vote for her version."

Henri Blaye spread his hands. "I will phone my friend and ask for—how do you Americans put it—a rain check. Yes."

At quarter to midnight I was standing in the recessed doorway of *Siccard et Cie.* in my black jump suit, casting a searching glance around me at the silent rue Chenier. From my belt I drew a rubber suction disc and fitted it to the glass pane in the door I meant to open. I drew out a glass-cutter with a length of cord attached to it.

Fastening the cord to the suction disc with a thumb, I swung the glass-cutter in a circle. Gently I tapped the glass that the suction disc held. It came free, held by the tiny rubber cup. I reached my free hand into the hole, fumbled a moment, found the bolt and drew it back. It was a simple matter after that to undo the two locks that were supposed to protect *Siccard et Cie.* from burglary.

I slipped inside the store.

The moonlight and lamplight coming through the big display windows showed me that I was standing in a veri-

table treasure house. A Derby porcelain sweetmeat dish stood beside a bronze and velvet and Sevres doghouse worth one thousand dollars in American money. A gold and ebony model of an early French steam engine cast its shadow over a gold, platinum and crystal creation by Alexander Seidel, valued at fifteen thousand iron men.

Everywhere I looked, there were goodies for the eye. A set of solid gold cherubs playing musical instruments, solid silver chess pieces carved to show Attila and his Huns against the Roman legions, miniature watches, a number of bronze statues by Epstein and Moore, suits of gold-inlaid armor, and swords and battle axes, made a plentiful potpourri of posh profit.

I strolled down the aisles, admiring everything but wasting no time on nonessentials. I was after a particular chalice, and nothing else. True, I saw a number of chalices, one of gold decorated with diamonds and rubies, and another golden Coptic chalice, but these were for sale. The cup I was after would be either locked away or in a back room, hidden from curious eyes.

In the back room, an office of sorts, I found a small safe set back under a counter and disguised by a sliding wood panel. I knelt down. Surely the pyx would be in here. I pressed my ear to the cold metal, and put delicate finger-tips to the dial. Slowly I began to turn it.

The room was as silent as the grave as that dial turned and whirled and I listened to the faintly clicking tumblers. The silence was oppressive, pressing in on me as my fingers ran the dial back and forth. I had found two of the numbers, but the third eluded me.

My daddy, who is a locksmith, had taught his only

daughter well. I can open almost any safe made, with time and female patience. David Anderjanian tells me he thanks the good Lord that I work for L.U.S.T. and not for my own greed. When my childhood image of myself as Penelope Courage, girl safe-cracker, died, a good secret agent had been born, I guess.

I drew a stethoscope from my kit-belt. I plugged my ears with it and held its end to the cold metal. Crouched down, I turned the dial again and again. Ahh, there it was. The faintest of little clicks that told me the final number.

An instant later, the safe door was open.

I reached inside to an object covered over with felt. I brought it out, pulled the draw-strings and revealed a pyx. My heart was bumping around with excitement as I held it to the moonlight filtering through the window. I could make out no markings which betrayed the location of the underground ABM system on it, but that could wait on another time and a closer inspection.

I put the chalice back inside the felt covering and closed the safe. I rotated the dial, slid the panel to hide it. Carrying the pyx, I headed for the front door.

Outside in the cold night air, I hurried my steps toward the little Renault in which I had driven to the rue Chenier. I did not see the two shadows moving away from the wall close beside the car, not until they became two masked men, with small French automatics in their hands.

“Bon soir, mademoiselle,” said one. *“Arretez, s'il vous plaist.”*

So I stopped. Just two ordinary run-of-the-mill robbers, I figured. A little judo or karate ought to take care of both of them. The only trouble with my idea was, they stopped too, too far away for me to apply anything but a mildly dazed look.

"Please to turn about," said the other.

I turned around. I held my wrists behind me.

When I felt hands catch my wrists, I kicked backward into an ankle. The man cursed in French, fluently and with feeling. I was whirling in the approved manner of fighting an opponent who attacks you from the rear, crouched down and reaching for his right arm.

I intended to throw him over my shoulder and through the air. I did not count on his companion. That masked gentleman merely stepped forward and let go with a savat kick that caught me smack-dab in the navel. I yelped and bent over, the wind knocked out of me. An instant later his knee whapped into the side of my face, toppling me backwards.

I woke up under bright lights, tied down on a table.

A man with a Vandyke beard and pince-nez glasses was holding the pyx in his hands and peering down at me. When he saw my eyes open, he smiled.

"Ah, you have come to, my dear. Very good. Now you will please tell me why you have stolen the Rougemont chalice, hein?"

I moistened my lips. "For money, what else? You see, I need money to pay my bills and—"

He shook his head at me. "No, no, *ma cherie*. It will not do, this fairytale you make up."

"But it's true. You see my name is—"

"Penelope Courage," he nodded.

I guess I looked surprised because he chuckled. "We have heard of you, you see. You tried to rob a man named Avery Taunton in High Wycombe, Engand. Oh, yes. We have heard by way of a telephone call. We have been warned to beware of you, that you are a highly ingenious young lady."

What could I say? Nothing. I just lay there spread-eagled on the table and waited for his next move. He did not seem like a cruel man but he was a determined one, and he wanted some information.

He said apologetically, "I do not want to hurt you—unless I must, that is. And I will be compelled to do that unless you answer my few simple questions."

"I did answer your questions," I protested.

"But not truthfully. No, *ma cherie*, I think I must apply a little pressure to loosen that so lovely tongue of yours. For instance, I am in a Chinese mood at the moment and so—"

His hands went to my shocs and removed them, one after the other. His eyes glowed as they studied my legs, fully revealed in the nylon jump suit.

"It is a shame to destroy that so-nice garment you are wearing. Should I remove it, or shall I apply the *bastinado* to the nylon-covered flesh? Hmm?"

I shivered. The *bastinado* is a thin bamboo rod that stings like holy hell when applied to human skin. My tongue ran around my lips and I began to sweat. My tormentor smiled at my reaction and let his fingernails tickle the bottoms of my feet, where the skin is very sensitive. My toes wriggled and tried to pull away from his touch, but could not.

My body was chained to the table, I was discovering, and the chains, though small, were strong enough to keep me almost immobile. There were tiny locks near my hands where the chains were fastened to the sides of the table and also, I assumed, there were locks and chains near my ankles. I could wriggle slightly, but not enough to avoid whatever it was the man was going to do to me.

He went away for a few minutes, then came back with a

bamboo cane about four feet long. He shook it in the air very rapidly so it made a whistling sound.

"The *bastinado* is of many sorts and sizes," he said confidentially. "This one is light, it is intended to hurt but not to destroy the flesh. There is an art in applying it, I will draw it across your soles so that soon you will be in great agony but there will be no blood. I am most considerate, *n'est ce pas?*"

He slapped my left foot with the rod, using a short, cutting movement of the arm. I bucked and howled in pain, flopping about in my chains, unable to draw my feet away from that cane. He dragged the rod across my other sole, and then he began a back-and-forth rhythm, first the left foot, then the right.

I was going out of my skull. Sweat ran down into my eyes. I was moaning now, my lips drawn back in what must have been a grotesque grimace. My body bumped up and down at the hips, but all that did was give me a sore behind.

Slup! slup! slup!

He whipped my feet until I fainted.

When I came to, he smiled down at me. "Still stubborn? Well, here's for another session."

He whipped my tender little soles until I fainted a second time. My feet felt swollen to twice their normal size, and agony ran up and down every nerve in my body.

I panted and wept, moving my head back and forth. My hands were clawing at the side of the table, but all I got from this was a splinter that wedged itself half under my nail. More excruciating agony.

My tormentor glanced at his watch. "It is now almost three in the morning, my dear. I have no more time to

spare on you. Unfortunately, I need my rest. However, though I sleep, you will not be able to."

His smile was quite a happy one. I suppose he was delighted with his devilish ingenuity, because he said, "More Chinese methods, *ma cherie*. Have you ever heard of the water torture? Ah, yes. I see you have. But you have not experienced it? No? Well, you shall now."

He pushed the table ahead of him until it bumped the wall. Looking up, I saw a faucet directly overhead. My captor put out a hand, turned the handle slightly. I watched the water well up in the faucet, and then saw a drop fall toward me. It hit me in the middle of the forehead.

"Doesn't hurt, does it?" he chuckled. "However—"

He found a big iron clamp, fitted it to the table and, catching my head, fastened it firmly. The drops of water fell regularly, plop, plop, plop. That did not bother me, not really, and I reflected that as a torture, this one had been far overrated. Stupid little me!

Thirty minutes later, after my captor had gone, those drops seemed like hammers tapping on my head. In an hour, I was screaming.

I could not twist free. I had to lie there and take this fiendish torture. It was the worst anyone had ever experienced. My skull was swelling, growing, and pounding savagely and I felt I would go insane if it continued much longer.

I had no way to tell time. I knew I was chained to a table in some sort of cellar. All around me were long, black shadows, cast by a lone electric light bulb on the far side of the room.

As the pain grew worse and worse, my fingers kept scratching the side of the table in a sort of reflex action. I

dug up some more splinters but, what were a few more pains? I even managed to scratch my finger on a metal sliver.

It took time for this last to register. I wasn't thinking very clearly. When I did, I opened my eyes wide and concentrated on my right hand.

Yes, it was a thin metal needle that had torn loose, somehow, in the past; maybe when the table had been scraped against a wall or a metal pipe. I ran my fingertip along it. I gripped it between forefinger and thumb and moved it back and forth. The metal was tin, I felt reasonably confident. Steel would not have bent so easily.

Back and forth, back and forth, I bent that tiny strip. I had plenty of patience and time, I was not going anywhere. Eventually, just as the pain inside my skull became absolutely intolerable, the thing broke off.

I held it in my fingers and wept.

Then I worked the needle around, fumbling for the lock that held my right wrist chained to the table. I'd read a lot about Houdini's mastery of the concealed picklock. He had been able to twist his fingers every which way. I had practised the same thing when I was a girl and entranced by my future as a lady crook.

I had been able to pick locks almost as well as Houdini. I was going to find out now if I remembered how. I inserted one end of the tin needle into the lock and wriggled it about.

click

The lock snapped open.

Gently I wormed the lock around until it came free of the chain. My right arm was free. My first act was to reach up and loosen that damn head vise. Now I could get my head out of the way of that falling water. The drops

began to thunk on the tabletop as I reached to slide the tin needle into the lock that held my left wrist.

It was child's play to free my legs. I swung around and put my feet on the floor.

I damn near died.

My whipped soles, when I put them down, were so sore they refused to bear my weight. It looked as if I was just as much a prisoner as ever. However, I discovered that when I stood on my toes, there wasn't so much pain. So I stood on my toes and ran across the room.

I opened a door.

The room into which I peeked was lighted only by a dim bulb. It held a couple of desks and chairs and was evidently some sort of office. I gathered I was in a big warehouse abandoned except by the B.A.D. boys who had captured me.

I ran across the room and out into a garage where there were a couple of old Renaults. I tried them both, but neither one would start, so I eased myself out through a door and stood on the sidewalk.

Dawn was breaking over Paris, tinting its night sky pink. I was in no position to walk to the Britannique. My feet hurt like hell. And I had nothing on under the black nylon jump suit.

At the corner was a row of telephone booths. Blessed sight!

I ran on tippy-toes, wincing only now and again. I had no franc pieces on me—a telephone call from a public phone is twenty francs for three minutes—but I knew a way to make a 'telephone hook' that would let me call whoever I wanted wherever I wanted, without cost.

I telephoned Dennis Keller.

"Dennis, I'm at the corner of the rue Buffon and the rue Corniche. Can you come and get me?"

"Be there in a few," he mumbled sleepily. "Hang on, doll."

He turned up in ten, held his questions until I had burrowed down in the suicide seat under a blanket. I kept shivering. While he drove I filled him in on the details.

I ended by saying bitterly, "I flopped! I flopped worse than an amateur goop. I had the pyx in my hands—and I let them take it away from me."

"We'll have other chances," he said soothingly.

"And my feet hurt and my head aches and—oh, hell! I feel lousy. I'm going to get out of this business, I swear on a stack of Bibles. All I get is pains and bumps and bruises."

Well, that wasn't gospel truth. I do draw a damn good salary with bonuses for jobs well done. I live high up on that little old hog, and I can't say I spend much time being bored. Right then I was at low ebb. I even sniffed a little, in telling him about my whipped soles.

"I'll run you a bath and carry you to the tub myself," Dennis said gallantly. "I'll bring you breakfast in bed and read you the morning paper."

He tossed his trench coat around my shoulders and helped me walk into the hotel by a back entrance. We rode up in the service elevator.

Inside the room, Dennis left me to get out of my jump suit while he went to run my bath.

"You'll make some lucky girl a real fine husband," I told him when he picked me up to carry me into the tub. "I'll have scrambled eggs with ham, toast and oodles of coffee. Is Paris coffee any good?"

Dennis grinned. "Not by American standards. But it

will be hot, at any rate. You get comfy, pet, and leave the rest to me."

I examined my beaten soles carefully. They were red and slightly swollen but they could have been a hell of a lot worse. Pince-nez Pete was an artist with the *bastinado*, he had not cut the skin. I figured that with rest, I'd be my old self again in a matter of days.

I slid a soapy washcloth all over, leaning back and luxuriating in the sudsy water. The warm water made me feel sleepy. I heard Dennis on the phone, giving our order, and told myself I was going to like it here in Paris for the next couple of days, or until further orders came through.

Just because I'd flopped didn't mean the game was over. I rather imagined I would be hearing from David Anderjanian on trans-Atlantic telephone any minute now. My case officer rarely lets me file a report. He is always in there being nosey before my cases are really finished.

Dennis knocked. "Breakfast's here!"

I wrapped myself in two huge bath towels and slid my feet into slippers that took a little of the ache out of my tootsies. I padded in to breakfast with a happy smile.

Over the coffee and croissants, I told Dennis, "You'd make a wonderful husband, Denny. How come no girl has snapped you up?"

"Never met the one who could hold my attention for more than a month. You, now—well, I'm not so sure." His eyes were gleeful as he teased me, and I giggled.

We flirted with each other, I must admit. It did not get down to basics because the telephone rang. It was the man in the watch-truck, with a message.

"Your pyx is on its way out of the country," the man told me. "I just eavesdropped on a customer conversation."

"Where away?"

"Orly airport at noon. It's being shipped to East Berlin via a small passenger plane, a two-seater, I believe. *Sicard et Cie.* is to deliver it at quarter to twelve to the pilot, somebody named Jacques Bigorre. Good luck."

"Yeah, luck," I nodded as I hung up.

Dennis raised his eyebrows.

"Forget what you were thinking, honey," I told him morosely. "And it's no sleep for yours truly. I have a job to do."

I told him about it while I dressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

I walked across the tarmac in a satin A-line dress by Laurence Gross and a mink stole by Emba, teetering along on my three-inch heels by Kimer. I drew wolf whistles and one proposition from the French mechanics scattered here and there and working on Caravelle engines belonging to Air France. It's always been my theory that if you are going to do something illegal, do it openly and dressed fit to kill. Most people will be so busy admiring you, they won't pay any attention to what it is you're doing.

Like now. I moseyed across the tarmac with Dennis Keller at my heels posing as a photographer, Canon and Argus hanging from his neck on leather thongs, tripod under arm, light meter in hand. I was a model, he was the picture taker.

We snapped a few near the huge rubber wheels of a Caravelle. Then we moved on, posing here, posing there, until we were in front of a French version of the Piper Cub. I threw out my hip, raised my arm in a farewell gesture and smiled for the camera.

"Is this the one?" I asked Dennis.

"Yes. We'll move around to the other side. I'll open the door. You pose there, I'll snap you while you have a look around."

I played model to the hilt. I perched inside the plane, in the driver's seat, and I rolled eyeballs all around the interior. There was a tarpaulin tossed over some odds and

ends in the rear of the cockpit. It would make a reasonably good hiding place for a stowaway.

Dennis pretended to snap my picture as I crawled rearward. My Belgian Bulldog revolver was in my handbag, and my Movado wristwatch told me it was ten minutes past eleven.

"How about it?" he called.

"I'll sit. If nobody's looking, go away. I'll be all right," I assured him, pulling the edge of the tarpaulin up over my head.

He shut the door and walked off. Apparently, the mechanics were back at work. It was hot under the tarpaulin in the little plane but I made myself endure it, although it seemed hours before the door opened again and the pilot got in.

I listened as he revved up the plane and taxied it across the field for take-off. He kept up a running monologue with the flight tower. Knowing he was too busy to bother looking behind him, I threw off a fold of the tarpaulin so I could breathe.

The noise in the little plane was deafening. It was not soundproofed the way passenger jets are. As the motor roared and the wheels cleared the ground, I opened my bag and brought out my Belgian Bulldog revolver. I could make out the felt wrapping of the pyx on the seat beside the pilot.

We were half an hour in the air and heading toward East Berlin when I made my move. Soundlessly, I got out from under the tarpaulin and pushed the muzzle of the Bulldog against the back of his head.

"This is a skyjack, fella," I breathed.

He damn near died from shock.

"Turn her around nice and easy, and head for Lille. There's a private field there where you can land."

He remonstrated with me in somewhat hysterical French, telling me that he served a very rich Communist, a leading member of the Secretariat, who would have my life for this, and more probably his own. He had a wife and a child, he begged me not to shoot. He wept a little, real tears. In all, it was a fine performance.

I didn't fall for any of it, I just kept the muzzle pressed into the back of his head. I told him this was sport in the United States, that planes were skyjacked to Cuba every week. As soon as he landed me at the private air field in Lille, he could fly off.

Lille is the capital of Flanders. It lies almost directly north of Paris, not quite two hundred kilometers away. To the casual observer, our tiny plane was just one more private craft out for an afternoon spin as the pilot zeroed in on the grassy meadow where a Renault was parked, waiting for me.

The plane touched ground, bumped a few times and finally slid to a halt. I reached for the chalice with greedy little paws.

"Au revoir, mon ami," I called, and jumped to the ground. I turned and saw him eyeing me, committing my face to memory. I smiled at him, waved the Bulldog barrel.

"On your way," I told him. "Or, if you'd rather I put a bullet in you, to save you the trouble of making explanations?"

"Non, ma'amelle!"

He slammed the door, roared his motor, turned and sped off down the field. I watched him lift into the air.

Dennis Keller came running, his handsome face split by a huge grin. "You got it, Eve! You got it!"

He threw his arms around me, heaved me off the grass and hugged me as he swung me around. He was as happy as I at the successful conclusion of our little venture.

"Home, James," I ordered as he set me back on the ground. "I have a lot of sleepy-bye time to make up for, remember? I haven't been to bed for two days and a night."

"Home it is, to our room in the *Brittanique*."

While Dennis drove the Renault southward to Arras, I slid the pyx out of its felt wrapping and examined it. It was a precious thing—all silver and jewels, and heavy—but I found no markings to suggest that the secrets of the ABM system had been engraved on it.

I realized something was very wrong. Feminine intuition, call it. It was just a feeling, a hunch, but I scowled at the chalice and looked at Dennis and felt my heart beginning to sink.

"There's nothing on it," I told him.

"Microscopic engraving," he said confidently.

"Oh, like a micro-dot."

He nodded, swerving to avoid an oncoming truck. "They can do miracles in micro-photography these days. For all we know, the micro-dot is under one of the jewels. It will take an expert to work on it, though."

We rode in blissful ignorance through the French countryside. Not until close to midnight was I to learn just how big a boo-boo I had made.

It began to drizzle as we neared the outskirts of Paris. By the time we were moving along the rue de Clichy, it was raining quite heavily. My blue mood matched the rain

even as Dennis swung the Renault into the garage attached to L.U.S.T. Paris headquarters.

My mood got worse, after that. The officials here, who were in touch with David Anderjanian via trans-Atlantic telephone, were going to neutrograph the chalice.

"Neutro who?" I asked dumbly.

"It's something like an X-ray, only better," the chief scientist told me. "An X-ray shows the insides of an object but the neutrograph reveals a lot more detail of what's inside."

He held up an X-ray and what I took to be a neutrograph. On the X-ray was the familiar white outline of a nude woman. When I looked at the other square of celluloid, I could see the various parts of a cigarette lighter in varying shades of grey and black inside the nude woman.

"But how's it done?"

"By sending a stream of neutrons through the lighter from a reactor. The X-ray shows metal, no more. The neutrons will also show plastic, rubber and a number of other materials. Neutrons, as you know, are subatomic particles with no electrical charge. They do not react to the electrons in the atoms of an object—which is what the X-ray does—but with its nucleus."

"What do you expect to find?"

He shrugged his shoulders. He was a tall man, this Marcel Albigny, and lean. His greying hair was closely cropped and he wore a dapper moustache across his upper lip. He was something of a dandy. I smelled after-shave lotion on his cheeks, admired the Christian Dior tie he was wearing, the sapphire tie-pin. His pin-striped suit fit perfectly.

"A something inside the pyx itself," he said, lifting the goblet, turning it in his fingers. "Perhaps a micro-dot somewhere under one of its jewels. Who knows?"

There was nothing.

They neutrographed that cup for an hour. Then a lapidary sat down and removed the jewels from the base, one by one. More neutrographs. When all the jewels were out, the chalice was examined under a powerful magnifying glass. No dot. No etching.

Marcel Albigny regarded me with upraised eyebrows. "It seems there has been a mistake. This cannot be the correct pyx."

I shrugged my shoulders and spread my hand. "What do we do now?"

Dennis Keller came up with the answer, the dear boy. "We start all over again, honey. We go back to merry England and pay Avery Taunton another visit."

"Oooooh, goody. I can hardly wait."

A very dejected Eve Drum walked to the Renault. Dennis would drive me back to the Britannique. I would go to sleep and when I woke up I would go back and do it all over again.

Next day around noon, while I was folding one of my mini-slips, about to fit into my Wings valise, the telephone shrilled. I was sure it was my case officer, calling to berate me for having flopped on the job. Then I heard Dennis Keller, sounding cheerful.

"Hold your packing, Eve. There's going to be that voodoo ceremony tonight."

"Just what I need. Voodoo."

"Our watch-truck picked up some very interesting conversation, snooping at *Siccard et Cie*."

“I’m listening.”

“Maybe I’d better come over with the tape.”

I glanced down at myself. I was wearing only panties and bedroom slippers. “Yeah, come ahead. But give me a chance to get decent.”

When his knock sounded I was shrouded in a house-dress. He came bouncing in, carrying an attaché case. He put the attaché case on the writing table and brought out a Cassette recorder. He plugged it in. The spool began to turn.

The voices came in clear and loud.

“—and tonight? Is the transfer taking place tonight?”

“He wants it that way.”

“The Devil gets his own way, of course.”

I blinked and looked at Dennis. “The Devil?” I asked, eyebrows arched.

The voices went on.

“He’s come a long way, you know.”

Prickles ran up and down my back. From hell?

A thick chuckle answered me. Then: “Well, he runs things. His Satanic Majesty dreamed up the whole thing, so he gets to say what happens. A privilege of rank, you know.

“He seems to feel that while everybody is high on drugs and drink and sex nobody’s going to notice spy secrets.”

“You may be right.” Somebody sighed. “All right, who gets to deliver it to Beelzebub?”

“How about Sabine? She loves those weird rites.”

“She also loves girls.”

“Yes, but—”

Dennis Keller leaned over and shut off the machine. “That about does it. We know voodoo rites are to take

place in the cellar of a bar on the rue de Beaujolais. Marli's, it's called."

"You going with me?"

"Of course. You're a stranger."

"And you're not?"

He grinned. "I've been there before, by invitation. When the voodoo thing is on I usually get a call and hop over to take part."

"So tell me, what's it like?"

"Mood stuff, chants. Candles and far-out dancing. Sex. Sometimes they sacrifice a chicken or a goat."

French L.U.S.T. had stationed a photographer in the watch-truck to take snapshots of everyone going in and out of *Siccard et Cie*. A few discreet questions established the fact that Sabine Dumont was a salesgirl there. They had photos of her blown up so I could identify her when I met her face to face.

She was an older woman, I saw. Fleshy, but pretty. I kept her photo with me and studied it over lunch, which consisted of a club sandwich and coffee in my hotel room. When I finished the last of the coffee, I knew I would recognize Sabine when I laid eyes on her.

We took a taxi to the rue de Beaujolais. I wore a mini-skirted shift dress with a turtle-neck collar over black nylon pantyhose and net bra. My Palizzo shoes had three-inch-high heels. I felt loose and happy, and intended to make up for my goof.

Marli's was a French discotheque out of which, as Dennis opened the door, a blast of sound exploded, threatening to deafen us forever. The postage-stamp-size dance floor bulged with bodies doing the latest and my blood kept tap. Dennis brought me through the mob with a hand at my elbow.

A door set into the back wall, covered with maroon imitation leather and brass studs, opened onto a flight of stairs. A big bouncer stood in front of the door but when Dennis flashed a black and white card at him, he nodded, ran his eyes up and down my girl-girl body and stood aside.

We walked down into the dim blue light.

The cellar had been converted into a soundproofed tabernacle complete with iron Baron Samedi cross set upright in the middle of the humfo, which means a place of worship. Imitation trees had been set up from whose branches hung *macoutte-a-Legba*, wicker baskets in which serpents are wont to nest in the jungles of Haiti and Brazil. There were serpents in them now, I could hear their soft hissing as I took my place among the worshipers on camp chairs.

The people here were from assorted stratas of society. A woman in a black satin evening gown, staring through a lorgnette, sat side by thigh with a file clerk in sweater and micro-skirt. Men in evening suits jostled men in sweaters and slacks. Everybody had one thing in common, they were looking for thrills and this was where the action was.

I parked my rump on a camp chair alongside a chick who looked like a real butch despite an evening gown. Since Sabine liked dames she'd probably wander over. Dennis moved back into the shadows close to the wall so as not to put a damper on my performance. He snuggled up close to a girl in culotte and satin shirtwaist. Near-naked girls began serving wine.

The cellar was almost full. Five more people came in after us, then somebody closed and locked the wooden door, shutting us all in comfy-cosy.

A faint whisper of fingertips on hide touched my ears as the *rada* drums began to sound. The blue lights dimmed. The men and women edged closer to the *veve* signs on the floor. I could make out the drummers, as my eyes became more accustomed to the dim blue lights, crouched in a kind of alcove made shadowy by three iron braziers in which red coals smoked.

“Damballah—hahiiii!”

A curtain was flung back with a clashing of the brass rings that held it. A naked Negress stood on spraddled legs in the entryway. Her breasts were full and high, hard and rigid. Her belly heaved as she breathed in and out, and her eyes flashed fire.

She stamped bare feet as the drums rolled echoes across the room. Her features were classic Watusi. Her hands were spread, fingers wide apart, on her thighs.

Then she was slithering into the room, bending to twirl her head so that her long black hair whipped out. Around and around her hair flew, and it seemed to me that she would fall down from sheer dizziness.

Her belly began to ripple up and down, making fleshy waves. Her hips arched and bumped, and the onlookers could see the shaven mound of her privacy and its deepset dimple. Now she began to walk, if walking it could be called. It was a moving invitation to lewdity, summoning the god Damballah from Ife where he lived to partake of the delights of his priestess.

The dancing woman was Erzulie, the voodoo Venus, goddess of love and beauty and also the spirit of jealousy and vengeance. To meet her would come Agwe her husband, as portrayed by the ceremonial priest. They would rid themselves of their basest passions here before

us all, and then would follow the sacrifice, the laying-on of hands by the priest and priestess, the *hunsikanzo* dancing, and—the orgy.

The orgy was what everybody was waiting for, why they had paid the fifty-dollar fee.

The drums boomed.

A naked man stood in the doorway, penis enlarged and ready. This was Agwe, husband and lover of passionate Erzulie. A woman moaned, seeing his phallus. On bare feet he began to shuffle toward the woman whose thighs spread wide invitingly.

In many of the oldest religions of the Earth there is the lascivious wife and the hungry husband. In India, there is Shiva and Parvati; in Egypt Isis and Osiris; in Greece Aphrodite and Adonis; in Babylon Zarpanit and Bel; in ancient Phoenicia Baal and Ashtoreth.

The principle seems always to be the same. The male is worshiped for his potency, the female for her lust to take his seed.

The woman sitting next to me reached over and began to pat my thigh. It was a smooth hand, with two diamond rings on it and bright red fingernails. I found myself staring into a pair of bold black eyes under a pair of blue-tinted eyelids. A lot of black hair was pushed around attractively on top of her head, with a jeweled comb or two holding it in place.

“Dahling,” she breathed. “You’re new.”

“Sort of,” I admitted.

“Good. I shall be your instructress.

She was staring past me at the priestess. My companion’s nostrils were dilated in excitement, and her heavy breasts, half out of her lowcut evening gown, trembled

fleshily. She did not look at me as she talked, but her hand crept under my mini-skirt, and slid gently back and forth.

"I love watching," she murmured. "It makes me itchy."

I played up to her. Maybe she knew Sabine. "Me, too. And I like to be scratched."

She chuckled throatily, and her fingertips moved to tickle me where I lived. My hips jerked involuntarily and I gave a kind of gasp. Her eyes slid sideways to my face, then downward toward my legs. Her hand had tugged the mini-skirt back so that practically all my pantyhose was showing.

I slid my palm over onto her stockinginged thigh. Her skirt was pulled up to reveal a pair of handsome legs all the way to her garterclasps. My fingertips began to roam and now it was her turn to get short of breath.

"Watch," she whispered. "Watch!"

The priest was crouched, legs bent. His priestess was on tiptoes, sliding forward, poising herself above the outstretched male. Just so had Zarpanit greeted Bel on the ziggurat platform during the marriage ceremonies on the tenth day of Nisam, as Isis had Osiris, and Ashtoreth Baal.

He rose up as she sank downward.

The woman Erzulie screamed, head thrown back, long hair falling to brush against her buttocks. The man Agwe grunted, flexed his muscular body, rammed himself upward. They performed the intimate rites with which mankind has always sought to worship his fertility gods. With bouncing hips, with shaking buttocks, Erzulie worshiped the male entrapped in her body. With shrill cries and convulsive bobbings of her belly she poured out her feminine welcome to him.

All around them the audience was going wild.

Men were linked with women, sitting on their camp chairs and, since the females outnumbered the males, women clung also to women. My partner was stroking me so cleverly she had me dancing on the edge of my chair, spreading my thighs, moaning, tightening my legs to entrap her working hand.

Agwe bellowed, head bent forward to the breasts of his beloved, hips jerking with uncontrollable pleasure. Erzulie sat upon him, bare feet planted firmly on *veve* signs, accepting his offering as Isis had Osiris.

He sank downward before us all, almost in a coma. I knew, even as I twisted to the cunning fingers of the woman at my side, that this coma was part and parcel of the ritual that symbolized the death of autumn when the crops did not grow. Each spring the god rose up again, when the buds began to blossom, of course.

Agwe was rising back to life now, before the adoring mouth of Erzulie, bent before him to worship at the shrine of male potency. Her head bobbed up and down, lips working. Now Agwe was again a god, potent and terrible.

Erzulie turned from the god, ran to the *veve* signs. The candles flared high and in their glow we heard a goat bleat. The priestess moved from the shadows, drawing the goat after her. Its horns and hooves had been gilded, there were ritual markings on its hair. It bleated once, in possible animalistic protest against its fate, then walked submissively behind the priestess to the Pit of Sacrifice. The priest advanced, still naked and as amorously aroused, but now he held a broad-bladed knife in his right hand.

The priestess pushed the goat downward, so that its horned head was above the pit. The priest bent and his knife flashed across the throat of the helpless animal.

“Oooooh,” breathed the woman beside me.

The drums had been muted, barely throbbing during the slaying. As the blood gushed out and the goat slumped, they boomed out, vibrant and alive. Their tonal tattoo rolled over the room, caught us up in its primal beat, pounded atavistic rhythms through our flesh and blood.

CHAPTER FIVE

A man bellowed, standing up, tearing at his garments. A woman across the room wailed and yanked up her dress, baring stocking legs, red garters, hips. One by one the others revealed how blood-letting on top of sexual savagery had excited them.

The woman beside me turned her open red mouth to my lips. Her hands caught my head and held it as she kissed me, thrusting her wet tongue deep into my mouth. Her hand dug into my secret flesh as if to drive me insane.

My job was not to sink into a froth of lesbian love, it was to search out Sabine Dumont and watch her, make sure she had the pyx so I could take it away from her a little later on. Even as my companion's tongue caressed my own, I slid my eyes around the room, hunting for the woman whose photographs I'd studied earlier in the day.

I saw her in a dim corner, wearing a white satin evening gown, a rope of pearls about her throat and with tiny pearls clustering in her greying hair. She was about forty, her body ripe with curves but not fat. Her breasts were large and soft, they quivered in the bodice of the lowcut evening gown as if seeking to be free while her soft, ringed hands slid back and forth over the slimmer curves of a girl who could not have been more than twenty.

My eyes ran this way and that, but I saw no pyx. Not even a suggestion of one. What I did see was those ringed hands lifting the mini-skirt the younger woman wore, baring her pale legs. Sabine Dumont bent her head, began to kiss the soft thighs she was exposing.

My own playmate was getting desperate.

She was putting her hands up around my waist, catching my pantyhose in her fingers and yanking it down past my hips. Kneeling, she stared at the juncture of my thighs and torso with glittering eyes. Her red tonguetip came out to moisten her lips.

Dennis Keller was struggling with a pretty little brunette who seemed more interested in what my girl friend was doing to me than in what Dennis wanted to do to her.

I guess I made a pretty sight. The woman was lifting my legs with her ringed hands under my knees and spreading them. Dennis gulped and did a double-take, his own partner momentarily forgotten. The woman, kneeling between, began to kiss my inner thighs.

Dennis urged his girl friend closer. I heard him say, "Like a bit of that, sweets?"

The brunette goggled, nodding. The woman was half-way up my inner thigh now, licking it with her darting tongue. I must admit, in all honesty, I enjoyed what she was doing. I was wriggling and jumping around in the chair while I peered up at Dennis.

He urged the brunette forward. "Stand over her head, love," he directed.

She lifted a leg and did what he told her, offering me a fine view of her plump white behind. As the kneeling woman felt those thighs close in about her ears, she glanced up at what lay between them, and was lost.

"Oh my dear," she whimpered.

The ringed hands went away from my thighs to those other, softer thighs. The nails dug in. The kneeling woman merely had to raise her face an inch or two, and kiss. She did so with a starving hunger and a quickly muffled cry. The brunette moaned deep in her throat and slid her

hands down to the black hair with the jeweled combs set into it.

Dennis grabbed my hand, yanked me toward him. My body met his in a standing position, and then his lips were battening on my lips, his hands running up and down my back under the upraised shift dress. The pantyhose was down around my ankles and the shift dress was up under my armpits. I was one exposed girl. I could feel my buttocks shaking loosely as I urged my nakedness nearer to him.

"The pyx," I whispered when he let go of my lips. "I didn't see it."

"Neither did it, I ducks. But it's got to be here."

"Let's take another look."

Strange conversation for lust-driven secret agents, no?

He shoved me ahead of him as if manoeuvering me into a better spot for lovemaking. I moved in little steps because of the pantyhose hobbling my ankles, and kept brushing his excitement with my own . . . he gave a couple of gasps and moaned.

"Poor boy," I whispered. "Is him suffering?"

"Don't be a bitch."

A few more feet, and then we were almost bumping hips with Sabine Dumont and her young chick. I got a good look: The older woman was standing before her naked prey, lifting the hem of her white satin evening gown.

I saw handsome legs in liquid stockings, somewhat heavy thighs and a pair of white buttocks half hidden under a black girdle. Up went the evening gown, her fleshy back appeared and then as she half turned, I saw a large-bowled breast jerking and quivering in freedom. . . .

Dennis was bulging eyeballs, I was staring at the white satin gown, wondering if it was covering the pyx. *Where*

the hell was the pyx? I tried to think, but who can think at a time like this? Not even little old Eve Drum.

My boy friend was getting out of hand. His manhood was absolutely bounteous. The sight of Sabine Dumont, kneeling before the seated girl and leaning forward to kiss her flesh just as hungrily as my former partner had kissed mine, was doing things to his libido.

“We can’t just stand here,” I hissed.

He bent down and came up right on target. I gave a little cry and hunched down to welcome him. We went on and on, half out of our skulls, but still keeping an eye on Sabine.

She knelt with legs spread slightly so an onlooker might catch a fast look at her hairy crotch; she was very busy, the girl she was paying lip worship to was shivering steadily, her blonde head leaning over the back of the chair in which she sat, her thighs upheld.

I glanced around the room. The voodoo experts had done their job well, the cellar was a scene out of *The Inferno*. The blue lights had changed to red, and if hell was anything like this, the Devil and I would get to be good friends.

Everywhere I looked somebody was balling somebody else or working in tandem. I even saw trios and once, in a dark corner of the room, four people moving in a sweating symphony of shaking flesh and pistonning lips. My own hands were gripping Dennis by the shoulders, my nails digging into his flesh and leaving little half moons there as proof.

Dennis was heaving away, panting like a leaky bellows.

His legs began to shake, so I urged, “Let’s lie down, honey. Sabine’s going to be a long time at her work, looks like.”

Heedless of the dirty floor, I lay down without breaking contact. Dennis Keller followed me, not missing a beat. The night became a chaotic carnival of carnal copulation. I watched couples split and take on other partners, I saw more erotic tableaux than I believed possible. And all the while Dennis went on sawing back and forth, up and down, bouncing me along in our hurricane.

Then I heard Sabine saying, "Sorry, darling. Got to run."

"No, please."

"Little girls' room, you know."

Dennis was still taking his turn in love lane, but my eyes were on the older woman. She was standing, smiling down at the young girl, opening her Coblenz handbag and extracting a ten thousand franc note and pressing it into the girl's hand. Then she bent and lifting her dress, ran across the room toward a door marked: HOLES.

I should have gone after her. I admit it.

It is a poor secret agent who cannot put aside pleasure for duty. David Anderjanian would not have liked this dereliction of mine. I groaned and gasped because Dennis Keller was lifting me up off the pleasure plateau and into the orgasmic phase of our public relations. I shook and shuddered, bit and scratched and shrieked. . . .

I oozed back to life slowly, a slow smile on my lips. I could not think of anything, much less my duties. I floated in a place where there were soft voices and pleasant music and I was goddess of the world.

Dennis's hand caught mine, lifted me to my feet. My pantyhose had long since come off. I left it on the floor but pulled down my shift dress to hide my nudity. My eyes went around the room. Most folks were still paying their tributes to Venus.

"Get after her," Dennis told me.
I took one step and stopped.

The rada drums were moaning and the lights in the room began to dim. Half-a-dozen couples were sprawled on the floor between me and the ladies' room.

The lights went out. The room was pitch black.
I heard a gasp nearby.

"He comes!" a woman screamed. "Satanus comes!"

I felt chills run down my spine. A redness grew in the utter darkness, a redness the color of hellflames. Red flames, and blackness, and the smoke of fire mingled with the smell of sulphur. I was looking into hell!

I told myself not to be an idiot.

This was clever stage work. Props and all that. This was not hell I was staring at, those were not real flames leaping red and yellow from a corner of the room. Reality was not collapsing all around me, as the screams and shrieks of men and women seemed to indicate.

And yet—

Something was forming inside the flames.

I shook all over, staring. I told myself in a weak little voice that maybe we had been drugged, that this was the explanation for what I was seeing.

A horned head, first of all. And red eyes gleaming wickedly. Then the smoke parted to show a body.

A man-beast stood there in the flames, a man-beast with the chest and torso of a giant human being, heavily muscled and covered with hair. Below—were the cloven-hoofed, shaggy legs of a goat!

I gulped, shaking. I damn near peed.

Legends of the devil say he is half-man, half-goat. Before medieval times, he was depicted as a man with wings

and an evil expression. The middle ages added the goat's legs.

Since then except for the devil of Faust, usually a man with beard and horns and clad in scarlet tights, the devil has been half-beast in artistic representations. Man or beast, this *was* the Devil, alive and in a Parisian cellar.

His red eyes went around the room. I saw gleeful delight as they took in the sexuality of his worshipers. I read happiness in his faint smile. And then I began to shiver, because those red orbs had turned and were staring straight at me.

I am a hip chick. I like to think of myself as being as sophisticated as anyone on Earth. But as those red eyes ate at me, I felt their evil all the way down to my toes. This thing really *was* the Devil!

My eyes tried to turn away and could not. My body had turned to lead. Hypnotism? Was this man in the Devil-garb a master hypnotist who could control my thoughts and emotions?

I was not sure.

And as those eyes stared into my mind, into my soul, I thought I was, indeed, staring at Satan himself and at a corner of his empire that he had caused to leap across the voids of space and time. And then I felt something tugging at my body.

My foot went out and took a step toward him.

I fought my body, moving in response to those red eyes and not in response to the commands of my brain. Evil and sin, sin and evil, were like fragrant poppies writhing all around. I felt the caresses of invisible flower petals on my breasts and nipples, on my thighs and private parts. I shuddered uncontrollably under the rut-heat those unseen flowers were causing. A moment ago my carnal desires had

been satisfied. Now they were flaring up like flames around pitch-soaked logs.

I whimpered. I was afraid of this dark, horned thing with the red eyes and the goatish legs that seemed to be in command. Afraid? I was scared witless.

It was summoning me. It lusted for me.

The nearer I came, still walking under the spell of those scarlet eyes, the better I could see the Devil. He was naked, except for the shaggy hair on his legs and on his muscular chest. And his loins were bared to my eyes, his manhood long and rigid in the heat of his desire.

His lips smiled wickedly. He knew where I was looking, he knew that I yearned to take his heated manhood into my body, to welcome it as the female has always welcomed Beelzebub as a lover in the rites of demonolotry. I shook, but not with fear, now. I shuddered with the lusts of every woman who has ever leched for man.

I moaned.

His finger pointed. I sank to my knees slowly, as if in a daze. His great organ was before me, demanding my kiss. I even wanted to. I was under some kind of spell. I leaned forward and kissed *it* with open lips.

Above me I heard a thick chuckle.

“Woman, you are mine,” said a deep voice.

“Master, I am yours,” I replied.

“Rise, woman. The master accepts you.”

I got to my feet. A hairy hand gestured toward a flat altar standing amid the fireflames. There was a stone step before it. I put a foot on the step and ascended the stair to the altar.

Hands touched my dress. Hairy hands, thickly veined and dark, almost black and immensely powerful. Those hands gripped my dress, tore it down so that my breasts

and hips and thighs were bared to every onlooker. I sensed that people were as much out of their skulls with terror and lust as I.

The drug in the wine, my mind whispered. There is no Devil. He is only a myth. There is no hell, and this altar at my back is nothing more than a clever stage prop.

I sat down on the edge of the altar. The hair hands came to cup my breasts. At their touch my breasts hardened, stood forth lewdly, proudly. I moaned.

There must have been some drug in his palms, judging by their effect on my flesh. The erotologists of the East have long maintained that a reddish powder of cinnamon, mustard, pepper and other irritants exists—Hsi-men Ch'ing is reputed in the novel *Chin P'ing Mei* to have sprinkled his male member with it—that drives men or women mad with desire when properly applied.

I shrieked in absolute rut.

My thighs went up, my head went back. "Take me! Oh, take me!" I yelled, my hips shivering with the need to know the devil-strength of this horned one.

His fingertips brushed my femininity. The powder was on his fingertips, too, it seemed. I howled in need. I was a bitch in heat, the wanting woman.

"You are mine, woman."

"Master! I am yours!"

It touched me with its organ. Gently. Yet there was fire all along my nerve-ends as its massive manhood performed the *tekhfidz* movements of the Arabs in which the male member does not enter the female portals but only brushes back and forth over them.

A part of me turned inside-out. I lurched forward, mewling. The Devil chuckled at my erotic eagerness. Then he slowly moved in on me, driving inward, burrowing deep

and still deeper, steadily. I was only vaguely aware that he was resting his hands on either side of my naked hips, that he was letting my hips do all the work while he merely leaned forward.

I could not control my reactions. I forgot all about L.U.S.T and Dennis Keller and the pyx. I was just a *con*, as the French sometimes name the feminine sex organ, and needed my *consommer*. My hips danced and jerked, they flew up and down and sideways. I could not breathe, my throat was too tight with the needs of my body. Sweat ran down my face and dripped from my bobbing breasts.

Back and forth. Up and down. I died with delight at every instant of this hip-play. I did not know where I was or what crouched above me, smiling coldly, its red eyes glaring down into my tormented face. All I was aware of was this play of genitals, one within the other. Never in my life have I so needed this priapic play. Every *feter* in which I had indulged in the past had been leading up to this moment of madness.

The Devil did not stir.

It was unmoving, as if it were a statue. Only from time to time did *it* grunt, so that I might know it was alive.

It came to me that *it* was going to kill me with this copulative connection. My body could never get enough of its strange power over me. I begged and pleaded for more, for more, even as I hammered myself at it. Women have been known to die when given too great a dosage of Spanish Fly; I was in much the same boat. I could not achieve enough orgasms to quiet my flesh, each convulsive contortion was only the signal for something inside me to demand another and another and yet another.

Tears welled up in my eyes. I knew what was happening to me, but I could not prevent it. If this Devil were a man,

the leader of the B.A.D. boys, he was getting rid of a L.U.S.T. agent by zigzagging her to death. My head went back and forth as I tried to control my bodily reactions but I could not.

Time meant nothing. I had been lying under the Devil since the beginnings of Time itself, since the day that God had made the firmament. The Devil had lived before that, even. I vaguely recalled that Beelzebub had been tossed out of Heaven by Saint Michael before the Earth had been created.

I exited in a void of sensation.

Being only human, I could not live long at that constant peak of excitation. I clung to pleasure with every atom of my being. I dug fingernails into the tinted clouds that swirled around me, I wrapped legs about the solidity of Satan.

But in the end, as I knew I must—
I died.

There was nothingness.

Except darkness and a vast silence.

And then—

There was pain.

My eyes opened. I hung in a black room, held by wrists and ankles to silver chains, spread-eagled naked above a red pentagram where black candles burned. Gone was the cellar of the voodoo rites, gone the worshipers of Erzulie and Agwe, gone the adorers of the Devil.

I moaned, shaking my head so that my blonde hair would fly out of my eyes. Dazedly I stared about me, recognizing black velvet drapes that hung down from a ceiling and on walls around me. The floor was of black stone and red paint, in the form of a five-pointed star. The can-

dles burned softly, they provided the only light in the chamber.

Someone chuckled. I knew that sound.

My head turned. I glared around. "Where are you?"

"Here, Penelope. Right below you."

I stared down. There was nobody there. Then the candle-smoke swirled and twisted together and formed itself into the shape of a man.

I knew him, of course, even without his goat's legs and horns. This was the Devil.

"You're a good actor, I give you that," I croaked. "Tell me, how'd you do it?"

"That is my secret. Am I the Devil—or am I not?"

He didn't look like the Devil. Here was a handsome man wearing evening dress.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"In a room in my Paris home, especially fitted for times when I permit myself to appear to mortal men—and women—for a specified fee."

"What does the Devil need with money?"

"Who spoke of money? Deeds can be a price. Even—souls. This is your last night on Earth. You are going to die, since your death is the fee I am charging for having pleasured your body in the voodoo cellar. You remember how much you enjoyed our coupling?"

I nodded numbly. Indeed I did! Devil or man, this one was a lover beyond belief. He'd had me on the ragged edge of insanity a dozen times. Frankly, I was scared of him.

Head tilted to one side, he stared up at me. "I have heard that you are a most resourceful female. You evaded my man in High Wycombe, you stole a chalice from an airplane, you've pulled a number of acts that border on

the spectacular. I could use a girl like you in hell. So that's where I'm sending you, once I leave the room.

But before I go, there is something I must show you in case you manage to escape this trap as you've escaped others. Look, Penelope—look below.

He whipped a doll out of his evening jacket.

The doll looked just like me. Hell! It *was* me.

“Observe, Miss Courage,” he murmured.

His hand squeezed the doll's legs and I cried out in pain. I felt as if a giant hand were all but wrenching them from their sockets. The sweat of pain ran down my face.

“How'd you do that?” I panted.

“Maybe I am the Devil, with all his devilish powers. Which include the ability to make an obeah doll of you and with it, possess a kind of control over the real doll. Eh?”

I did not answer him. What was the use?

He chuckled. His hand brought out a long pin, the old-fashioned hairpin of the Victorian era. He shoved it into the doll right where her bellybutton made a dimple, saying, “Courage now, my dear!” I screamed in agony. A hot knife had been thrust into my navel.

The Devil drew out the pin. His eyes glinted with triumph as he stared up at me.

“You must understand, my dear Penelope. I do not intend to use this obeah doll after tonight. You will be dead by tomorrow morning. And yet—just in case you make one of your miraculous escapes—I shall retain the doll. It will give me—control—over you in the future, no matter where you are.”

“I don't believe it,” I said hoarsely.

“Liar! You do believe it. Do you want another demon-

stration?" The pin lifted menacingly toward the right eye of the doll.

"No," I screamed.

"Master," he hinted.

"Master," I replied numbly.

I give him this much: he had all but broken my spirit. I hung there naked in those silver chains and sweated out my fear. I could not even draw my legs together to hide my blonde crotch from his upturned eyes. Since my legs were held apart by the chains, I was exposed to him as lewdly as a succubus come to tempt a man in the night.

He stepped back, moved toward a heavily draped wall. His hand lifted and fumbled at something behind the black velvet. There was a rumbling sound.

In horror I stared straight down at the scarlet pentagram drawing back and sliding out of view beneath the floor. Where the pentagram had been was now a pentagonal pit eight feet deep, with smooth, glassy walls.

Inside that pit was a layer of red-hot coals.

I gagged in despair.

"Your manacles will be removed, my dear Penelope, by means of an electronic device. As they let go, you will drop downward into the Devil's pit you see. There is no escape from that pit. Those coals will burn your feet, your legs, any part of you they touch. You shall die in agony, I am afraid. I shall not remain to watch."

He drew back against the draped wall. A tremendous amount of heat was rising from those red-hot embers. High above them I could feel the heat waves rising like tongues about my nakedness. Sweat glistened on my girl-flesh, it ran down my head and into my eyes. I whimpered, knowing what was to come.

"The chains will be lifted higher," the Devil told me,

"so that when they release you, you will fall so swiftly you will have no possible way of breaking your fall by grabbing hold of the edge of the pit. In a way, you might say I am being merciful, because when your body hits those coals, you will undoubtedly break a leg.

"This means you won't be able to do more than crawl across that bed of coals. Your entire body will be cooked at once, rather than just your feet, which would happen if you landed on them."

I bit my lip to keep from pleading for my life. The Devil would have relished that, he would have prolonged my agony of spirit in order to gloat over me. He saw my teeth drawing blood from my lower lip, and chuckled.

"Brave girl. Go to your death knowing you have my utmost admiration. I really do wish you were one of my fallen angels. But then, who knows? You may be condemned to be a hell-mate of mine in the eternity to come. Then mayhap I could send you back to the Earth to carry out a few of my demoniac plans."

His laughter rang out.

Then he was gone.

I hung there and stared down at the fiery pit.

I have escaped from other traps in my hectic career as the lady from L.U.S.T., but this was one fix from which I could see no possible way out. My lips quivered, and tears oozed up into my eyes. I would never see David Anderjanian again. I would never more ball fellow L.U.S.T. mates like Dennis Keller. I was going to die.

Why didn't the chains move? The Devil had promised that they would lift me upward, toward the ceiling, to make for a crippling fall.

Then it dawned on me that this delay was but to torture me the more. I was to anticipate that fall and the hellish

heat of those glowing red coals down below. My hour would come in good time. Until then I must hang here and die the thousand deaths of a coward.

The heat was pretty bad, even as high up as I was. Sweat ran down my body, it dripped off my toes and I could hear it sizzle as the drops hit that bed of slow red fire.

I do not know how long I hung there, but suddenly the chains began to lift. My body lurched. When the chains holding my wrists grew taut, they lifted my sweating body with them. The chains about my ankles slackened.

Arms spread wide, I rose ceilingward.

I was scared witless. As who wouldn't be?

I was going to be cooked alive.

CHAPTER SIX

Tears welled up in my eyes and I sobbed. I was frozen with horror, I could not remember a single word of any prayer I ever knew. All I could do was stare down at that receding circle of flame and bawl my head off. Then a kind of inner peace came to me. I lifted up my eyes and scolded myself.

“Be a brave girl, Eve; Try to—”

I found myself looking behind a fold of the black drapery shielding the ceiling. It had sagged close by, and I could see wooden beam-ends and pulleys and various motors and the bottoms of stage props. It dawned on me that the Devil practised his weird effects with the help of those props and motors. He probably brought clients here for a hard sell when they asked the help of the Devil.

Something else dawned on me.

My leg-chains were so slack, I might be able to—

I swung back and forth from my wrist-chains. They were taut, but they were so powerful they held my weight with ease. Forward and backward, back and forth I moved until by a sudden kicking upward of my legs I might wrap them about one of those wooden beams above me.

I heard a click.

My body spasmed as I lifted it on my forward swing. The manacles about my wrists were opening; so were the steel bands fastened to my ankles. My unburdened feet shot upward on either side of a beam. The rest of my body started falling.

The chains hung free. I almost did the same thing, be-

cause my left leg missed its hold on the beam. Luckily for me, my right leg caught it at the heel. I hung there, upside-down, staring down into the red pit. I did not dare apply pressure to the heel-grip for fear it would jar loose.

And yet, I couldn't hang here for much longer.

I started lifting my left leg. Slowly I inched my bare foot up the side of the wooden beam. My stomach muscles hurt like hell. This was a damned uncomfortable position but it was my only chance.

In moments my left heel hooked the beam. This was great on the thigh muscles. They were quivering in pain and prolonged stress. Although my body had been trained to absolute perfection, my muscles are only human. Once my thigh muscles got tired, they would rebel and I'd drop.

So I called on my middle muscles, bending slowly at the waist, lifting my arms until my straining fingers could catch the beam. I missed. The beam was too far away. My arms were not as long as my legs.

A heel slipped. The other heel dropped loose.

Seconds before, I had seen a chain hanging from the beam (I suppose it was used to lift great weights in this theatrically staged corner of hell) not too far away. I reached for it just as my foot-grip gave way.

My palms closed on metal links. My body swung down and I swayed along with the chain. It made grinding noises up above, but it held me. Hand over hand, I climbed upward.

I got onto the beam and lay there, practically dead.

If David Anderjanian or the Devil himself had come up behind me with a horsewhip, telling me to move or be whipped, I would gladly have suffered the beating. My body was like numb.

So I rested, maybe for half an hour. I was whoozy, I was pooped, I was in one sad state. Then I crawled along the beam, stepping over the motors and pulleys on it, until I got to a metal catwalk. The catwalk led me to a door.

The door opened onto the upper hallway of a big stone house. There was a thick runner underfoot, a bronze statue of Lucifer, a narrow window at the far end of the hall, and a dim electric light set into an old gas fixture.

The Devil was somewhere in this house, waiting for me to die. I thought it would be nice to surprise and kill him with my bare hands. I told myself to avoid looking into his eyes. He was a master hypnotist. I guess in his line, he had to be.

I tried two doors before the third door opened.

The Devil stood in a room filled with liturgical instruments with pyxes and chalices, paxes and thuribles. Casocks brocaded with evil and unholy scenes, with sacreli-gious paraphrasings of events in the life of Chist for use in black masses and other forms of devil-worship, hung about the walls. The Devil stood at a table with his back turned toward me. He was bending over the table staring down at something and he was utterly still.

I tiptoed forward, fingers outstretched to grip his neck and choke. I made no sound, I did not even breathe.

Yet he said wryly, "Good evening, Miss Courage."

I screamed in agony. My body bent over and I grabbed my lower belly where the pain was absolutely unbearable. My feet started staggering around the room. It took all my will power not to fall down and play dead.

The Devil turned. I could see what he was so interested in, now. It was that damned obeah doll that looked so much like me. He had stuck a long pin in it, right where its lower belly was. His red eyes glistened, triumphantly.

He put his forefinger and thumb to the pinhead, wriggled the blade of the pin around. I could no longer stand. A bayonet was gouging out my insides. I went down on my knees, fell on my face and doubled up into a foetal position, hands clasping myself where it hurt.

"Silly Penelope," he chided. "Don't you realize, girl—that you are in my power, irrevocably? This is the work of the Devil, indeed. You are my slave, Penelope. Observe!"

He yanked the pin out. The pain went away. I lay there folded over and let the relief ooze throught me.

"I can do that whenever I want, no matter where you are. You must understand this, my dear. If I wanted, I could put this pin through your heart and you would be dead. Or in your eyes, and blind you. Now we don't want that, do we?"

We sure didn't. I shook my head, moaning.

"I don't know how you got out of those chains and avoided falling into the fire pit, but since you did, I'll accept the fact. I will not put you back there. Once escaped from, a trap loses its value. And thinking it over, I have decided that this is much more amusing, having you helpless before my whims.

"Have I informed you that I am a telepath of no mean proportions? I seem to recall that I neglected to mention that facet of my talent. Master hypnotist, adept telepath. What other powers have I? You may never learn, my dear.

"Now heed my advice. I am an opponent no mortal man or woman can hope to defeat. Be advised, then. Go get yourself married and forget you ever met me. That way we can remain friends. If you persist in your endeavors, Miss Courage—"

The pinpoint scratched my ankle. I felt as though

somebody had stabbed me. My throat made whimpering, pleading sounds. Standing above me, he nodded.

"Yes. You understand. I can remind you of my existence any time I want, just by hurting this doll. You will feel just as badly, when I do that, as you felt just now. Distance does not affect its value, my dear."

He reached for his cloak and tophat lying across the far end of the table. Dressed for the street, he lifted a small travel kit and opened it. He was about to thrust a flattish object wrapped in tissue paper into it when he had a second thought.

"Here," he said conversationally, "is the pax you've been seeking."

The tissue paper came off. The pax was about eight inches long, six inches wide. It glittered with richness in the light. The bas-relief scene on its face showed the Crucifixion, with Christ on the cross, with Mary and John below. A Roman soldier in full armor leaned on his pilum, off to one side. In the background, there was a carven hint of the city of Jerusalem.

He held it high.

"Beautiful thing, isn't it? I'm selling it to a Russian named Petr Kalinoff this night. He is even now impatiently pacing the floors of the Massenet Hotel, waiting. Once he puts his hands on this, and after he has paid me, I shall be on my way home."

"But since you've been rather a thorn in the sides of both my British and French friends, I decided to take a hand myself. So I am here."

As I stared down at him, I realized suddenly that Brian Evans had mistaken the word pax for pyx. No wonder I'd been hunting for a chalice all along. Until now, of course.

A pyx is a vessel like a chalice which holds the Host for

the Mass. A pax is a representation in bas-relief, of the Crucifixion scene. This pax which the Devil held was of solid gold, and it had the markings for Uncle Sam's underground anti-ballistic missiles system engraved in code on one side.

I had been looking for a chalice. I should have been hunting for something entirely different. And the Devil had what I wanted.

He wrapped the pax in the tissue paper and inserted it in his black travel case. Then he picked up the obeah doll. His red eyes studied my nakedness on the floor.

"Just to prevent you from following, Miss Courage!"

He jammed the pin into the doll's crotch, holding wide the legs. I screamed in agony. The pin was deep inside the doll. A searing knife was deep inside me. I shuddered and shook, I went on screaming in the utter agony of having my privacy impaled by a sharp sword. My buttocks bumped the ground as I writhed about.

His unholy laughter rang out.

Then he was gone.

It was a perfect escape gimmick, that obeah doll. I could no more have left the room than I could have taken wing and flown to the moon. I just lay there sweating in pain, rolling over and over, my fingers fumbling at my crotch as if they would find a length of swordblade thrust into me.

The house was silent. There was nobody in it but me, and so scream all I would, only my own ears heard me. I fainted after a time.

When I woke, the silence was heavy all around me. The pain was gone, thank God! I lay there and relaxed in complete ease. No more pain, no more suffering. It was great.

My hand reached out, caught a table leg.

I should have gone after the Devil and tried to find some way of getting that pax away from him. That was what I should have done. I said to myself, the hell with that. Next time the Devil might forget to take the pin out. No, Lucifer could go to his Russian friend and sell him that pax for any amount of money the Russian would pay.

David Anderjanian would take a dim view of my decision. The hell with him, too. I had a better idea.

First of all, I needed clothes. I telephoned Dennis Keller at the Britannique and briefed him on what tortures I had been undergoing. I informed him I needed wearing apparel. If he would come to the stone house—I fumbled through a desk drawer in the downstairs living room where the telephone was located and found an old tax bill—at the rue Camou, I would happily unbar the door for him.

After that he could drive me to the Massenet Hotel.

Dennis took half an hour to reach the house. Ten minutes later we were barreling along the Avenue de la Biurdonnais.

Dennis was very sympathetic. He suggested that he go to the Russian and steal the pax back from him. I could stay in the car so that the Devil would not see me.

"No," I grated between my teeth. "I owe the other side a little something. It will help build my morale."

"You've shown enough courage for—"

I screamed, doubling up. That swordblade was back in my private parts, jabbing unmercifully. "Damn, oh damn! He's sticking pins again."

Slowly, the pain went away. I sat there sweating and weeping. Dennis wanted to get me to a doctor, but I shook my golden locks. No doctor—except a witch doctor who

knew how to remove spells—could help me in my present plight.

Dennis drove me to the Britannique where I changed my clothes, donning a spiffy street number by Schiaparelli. It was brown taffeta and mini-skirted. I snatched up a handbag large enough to hold my Belgian Bulldog revolver.

Dennis drove me to the Massenet.

As the Renault pulled in to the curb and stopped, I got out and stretched my joints to make certain everything was still in working order. I winked at Dennis.

“Keep the motor warm, honey. Mamma won’t be long.”

I marched into the hotel as if I owned the place. My revolver made a pleasant weight in my handbag, but I didn’t want to be suspected of being a secret agent.

So when I came to the desk I leaned on it and winked at the man behind it. I told him Pietr Kalinoff was expecting me, that he had hired me for the day, to take him sightseeing.

The clerk looked bored. Pietr Kalinoff was not here to greet me. “He checked out earlier,” he muttered, gesturing toward the compartment that held the key to 253.

I thanked him and walked away out of sight then took the elevator to the second floor. In front of 253 I came to a dead stop. The door was wide open. A charlady in a blue bonnet and greasy uniform threw a smile at me.

“*Oui, madame?*” she asked.

“*M’sieu Kalinoff—is he here?*”

“*Je m’excuse, il n’y a personne ici.*”

I stepped past her to make sure the place was empty, then pressed a hundred franc note into her hand.

“*M’sieu Kalinoff—ou est il?*”

She beamed. “*L’airport.*”

The airport. So my quarry was on his way to Russia, or

maybe to Prague. If his destination was Prague, I still had a chance to catch up with him. I turned and ran.

Dennis Keller was sympathetic. He understood from his own experience as a secret agent that there were days when it hardly paid to get out of bed. He braved the Parisian traffic in a headlong dash to get me to the Britannique. While I packed, he made telephone calls.

I slithered out of the Schiaparelli number, hunted naked for the sharkskin suit in which I intended to travel to Prague. He turned to me, let his eyes get big, and gave a slow whistle. I was in the clothes closet, at least my front was, but he had a great view of the Drum bod from the rear.

"They're going to work on this thing at once," he remarked, gulping down his lust. "Their man at Orly will report back on what flight Kalinoff took. They'll call ahead to Prague to have a man ready to meet you—a taxi-driver, I believe he is—and take you wherever you want to go. The Prague underground-for-freedom will be at your service."

I nodded, bringing out the grey sharkskin. I lifted a shapely stockingled leg and thrust it into the skirt. I fitted in the other leg, then hoisted the skirt up aound my waist.

When he moaned, I smiled. "Later, pct."

He held the jacket for me so I could button if. Nobody but nobody would suspect that under this rather demure number I was stark naked. I reached for the matching toque and fitted it on over my blonde tresses.

The phone rang. Dennis leaped for it. When he hung up, he nodded with great satisfaction.

"Pietr Kalinoff took the noon flight to Prague on the Aeroflot line. There is another flight to Prague at three, via Air France. If we hurry, we can get you on it. Our man at Orly already has your ticket."

We hurried. It's great to be part of L.U.S.T., which has agents scattered all over the world. It makes my job ever so much easier. I vowed I wouldn't let L.U.S.T. down. I hurried after Dennis who was lugging my Wings bags.

The big jet liner was warming its engines when I accepted my tickets from the suave, handsome Frenchman who served L.U.S.T. as a ticket agent at Orly Field. My baggage had gone on ahead of me. I ran for Gate 4.

A mustachioed co-pilot checked my tickets, bowed me past him. I moved across the tarmac, hanging onto my handbag with one hand, my toque with the other. The wind didn't disturb my sharkskin skirt much, though maybe I did show a bit of thigh going up the boarding ladder.

Then I was in the blue leather seat and fastening the belt.

It seemed I'd barely settled myself for a long nap when the stewardess woke me, told me to fasten my seatbelt. We were over Prague Airport and circling for a landing. I did what the girl said.

I moved through the crowds into a brick and glass enclosure, where a number of taxi-drivers were waiting for customers. One of them, possibly briefed as to my appearance, hurried toward me.

"May I help the madame? It is my job."

"As long as you're not lustng for my body," I replied.

His eyes twinkled. "I will serve you in any way, *Madame.*"

So much for identification. He was my man.

He told me that Petr Kalinoff was registered at the Maly Hotel in Old Town in the Mala Strana section which, with the Stare Mesto, is the oldest part of Prague. The streets were cobblestoned, and the cobblestones were

small, he informed me, so that I would have to wear flat shoes if I intended to do any amount of walking. The houses had no electricity to light them, they all used gas.

In his delapidated taxi, he continued my education. He had secured rooms for me in the Maly, not far from where Kalinoff would be located. Getting the pax would be up to me, but he and his rattly old car would be ready at any hour of the day or night to whisk me off to the airport and a waiting jet to take me home, whenever I gave the word.

We sped acrosss Charles Bridge. From what I could see of Prague through the taxicab windows, it was a town straight out of the Middle Ages. Its architecture was reminiscent of feudal times, most especially in Old Town, which dates back to the eleventh century and in Lesser Town, which was built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centruries.

I half expected to see knights in armor clattering over the cobbled streets. Sure, there are modern places in Prague, but who needs them? This was more fun, by far. I had heard my grandfather speak of such things as gas mantles for illumination. Now I could see them for myself.

The Maly Hotel was decayed elegance. Its drapes were dusty, yet evocative of the era when Johann Stauss had written his famed waltzes.

I marched through the lobby like visiting nobility, the taxi-diver trailing after me, carrying my make-up box and my valises. As I signed the register, I worried about how I was going to separate Kalinoff from his golden pax.

I noted from the registry book that he was assigned to Room 378. My own room was 375, which would be diagonally across the hall.

A bellhop put me in a suite containing two bedrooms,

a living room and a bath as large as a small house. They did things big in the olden days.

I opened the door, peered out.

A waiter was approaching. Kalinoff's room. I closed the door, left it open half an inch. There was a sandwich, a pot of coffee, a cup plus saucer, and a bottle of vodka, together with a bowl of ice, on the tray.

Pietr Kalinoff opened his door, yawning.

"Thank you," he said in Russian, one of my languages. "Go find a *Do Not Disturb* sign and hang it on my door-knob." He chuckled thickly and maybe he winked, because he said in a lower voice, "I am going to have some fun before I go back to Moscow. Here in the old town nobody looks for diplomats and state couriers, you know? I shall have myself a little fun before I bury myself in Russia again."

It sounded like one good Party member was lusting for the fleshpots. I eased my door closed as the waiter bowed his thanks for the tip Kalinoff pressed into his hand, and walked off down the hall. I had an hour or two to waste.

Since I had slept on the plane, I was in no mood to take any rest. So I wandered out of the hotel and along the cobbled streets. We secret agents don't often get the chance to relax on a job, and I am human enough to enjoy loafing.

I strolled through the Mala Strana with the feeling that I was walking through the pages of a storybook. The houses all had little stone images on them—a lion, a dog, a monkey, a bear, which had been used, in the years before streets had place names, to individualize each house.

There were old palaces, too, scattered here and there about the squares, with spires and long windows and leaded roofs, and Gothic-style churches which pushed their

bell-towers toward the skies. The streets were cobblestoned, the sidewalks were flagstoned, here and there. I sauntered down the 'golden lane,' the Zlata Ulicka, pausing to stare through the windows of the little stores lining this corner of the city.

I went into a bake shop and bought myself a strawberry tart. I munched it as I walked. I gawked at St. Vitus Cathedral which had been erected close to six hundred years before, on the foundations of what had been already, a very old church. In Europe you run into old buildings, I mean really old buildings, that were ancient when red Indians were running around Manhattan Island.

Hradcany Castle was a for-instance, lifting its stone bulk above the rest of Prague, half misted in this late afternoon by an approaching raw, cold night. The castle, occupied now by the President of Czechoslovakia, had been built even before the cathedral. It had gardens where the men and women of Prague could go and walk and marvel at the view of their city.

I was of half a mind to walk there myself when the bonging of a big clock atop the town hall reminded me that my fun time was at an end. It was time to get back to the job. I was hurrying toward the Maly when a girl bumped into me.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, grabbing her to keep us both from falling, and staring into a somewhat overpainted, though pretty face. "I'm sorry."

She dimpled a little smile. "Is nothing. Just shake up the goods, is all." Her black eyes went down to her fullsome breasts juggling loosely in her lowcut dress. "Late for work. Got to hurry."

An idea hit me. "Where do you work?"

"In Blue Slipper café. Plenty girls, lots drink."

"I may see you later," I promised.

I stood there and watched her walk off, switching her plump behind. If Pietr Kalinoff was going to tour the city's night life (such as there was) the Blue Slipper had plenty girls, lots drinks, and sounded like just the place.

I dressed the Drum chassis in a velvet-topped evening gown with a sequin-striped, nude-net skirt by Menendez, which was low enough to bare the inner slopes of my unbrassiered breasts. Oh, yeah. The skirt had a pink nylon lining to protect the eyes of the onlookers from the full sight of my nakedness below.

My hair I did in an upsweep, with a couple of tiny pearlset combs set into it.

Honest, I looked good enough to eat.

I opened my hotel door and waited. Pietr Kalinoff came out, turned to close his door, making sure it was locked. I stepped out myself and we met face to face.

He was a beefy blond man, heavy in the chest and shoulders. He looked as if he might have been a weight-lifter in his younger days. His blue eyes grew wider at sight of me, and he made a little bow.

"Is it my good luck that you are alone?" he asked.

"I don't know about your good luck, but I am alone and I'm lonesome," I gushed, giving him my sexiest smile. "I'm a schoolteacher looking for some summer fun."

His eyes got a little glassy. He had struck gold with the first swing of his pick. He held his arm at me, crooked at the elbow. "Permit me to escort you, then. I am a lonesome man myself, being far from home. My name is Pietr Kalinoff."

My hand went into the slot of his bent arm. "I'm Eve Drum. I'm so glad to make your acquaintance. I want to

pay my own way, you know. Dutch treat. I don't want to be under any obligation."

His laughter boomed as he leaned closer to my ear. His eyes went to my low bodice, and glazed even more as they took in my outstanding attractions, absolutely nude under the brown velvet.

"I want you to be under an obligation. I know a marvelous eating place, the Bohemia. After we eat, who knows? Perhaps we will go dancing and drinking."

I laughed and hugged his arm. "You're a naughty man, but I'm in the mood for naughtiness tonight."

As we walked toward the elevator, I told him that a friend of mine, a naughty man in my own country, had suggested I go to the Blue Slipper where there were lots of drinks and loads of pretty girls. Pete was almost dancing in eagerness.

"I have not been much around Prague, I do not know the city too well. I have been recommended the Bohemia, but nobody told me about the Blue Slipper. We shall go there."

He was a good companion, he told humorous stories, he chatted about world affairs. I complimented him again and again on his *savoir faire*, his air of sophistication. I explained that I thought of Russian men as blue noses, as vodka drinkers and as shoe pounders on tables. He looked pained, the more I talked. Then I gave him the punch line.

"I hope you can convince me they aren't all like that!"

He damn near died in his eagerness to assure me he was not the typical Russian male. The impression that Nikita Krushchev had given me, he would do his best to erase.

The Bohemia was an old world eaterie with oil paintings hung on red velour walls, with gold leaf on baroque decorations covering ceilings and doorways. Big glass

gloves hid the gaslights and the thick maroon carpet added a certain decadent touch to its plush Victorian styling.

The cuisine was heavily Austrian. I made do with chicken *en gelée*, specialty of the house, and then added to my caloric count with an Annatorte, a chocolate cake with chocolate heaped all over it. They served the coffee with a dab of *Schlagobers*—whipped cream—floating on it.

We did not hurry. We feted. Pietr Kalinoff loved his goodies. He was well known here, it seemed, because he was bowing and head-bobbing all through the meal. We were the center of all eyes, perhaps because of his position in the Soviet Party, maybe even because I looked better than the Annatorte to certain hungry eyes. Three different times men came up to the table to shake his hand and be introduced to me.

When I complimented him on his importance, he waved a hand, though he did beam with delight. "It is the fact that you are a beautiful woman, Eve. While I am rather important, it is you who draws the raves."

It was sweet of him, I thought. I wondered where he'd hidden the pax and if I could exhaust him sexually enough to take it away from him without killing him. I kind of liked bluff Pietr Kalinoff.

We took a taxi to the Blue Slipper. A blue neon sign in the shape of an evening shoe hung above a wide doorway set flush into an old brick wall. A uniformed doorman on a narrow little sidewalk bowed us out of the car and through the door. A blare of dance music met our ears, together with the smell of beer and whiskey and a few billows of tobacco smoke.

There was a large dance floor and a curtained stage, with more than a hundred tables with checkered table-

cloths on them, plus lit candles where people were seated. Kalinoff stared around him and nodded his head.

"*Da, da!* I will like this."

A girl in a micro-skirt and very handsome legs in nylon stockings came forward to escort us to a table near the stage. Her back was bare, but her front was covered by a kind of black velvet costume that hid about half her breasts. Pietr beamed at sight of her, front and rear.

We drank whiskey that could have been smoother, by American standards, but I added a little water and plenty of ice so it went down easier. We were halfway through our drinks and an impassioned oration by Pietr Kalinoff assuring me that the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia was in its own best interests—despite my own impassioned denial—when the stage curtain swished back.

Girls in very teentsy costumes came out and did a kind of can-can. I was a little surprised by the costumes and said, "I thought the Iron Curtain countries were puritanical."

Pietr beamed. "We Russians are the puritanical ones, unfortunately. You must have read of Vienna and Prague in the days when Franz Josef was emperor? The lovely ladies in the *décolletés* and the men fawning upon them? The Austrians and the Hungarians know how to live. It is my own people who are the blue noses. We have eased certain restrictions here because of the fuss over our occupation of the country.

"All my people are not old maids, by any means. I enjoy a good time as much as any American playboy. You will see, my dear."

He winked heavily, then turned his attention to the girls prancing about on the stage. I looked at the girls too, and found myself staring at the girl with the black hair and

overpainted face into whom I'd bumped some hours earlier. She saw me, smiled and let her mascaraed eyes flash toward my companion. I pointed at him and at me, then at the table. She gave a little nod.

I leaned toward Pietr. "Are you sure you want a good time?" I whispered. He looked startled. Without taking his eyes from the girls, he leaned his head toward me.

"What do you mean, *devushka*?"

"I met a girl this afternoon. She's up there on the stage." I told him about bumping into her, how she seemed like good fun. "I was wondering if you could take two girls tonight. A *seance à trois*, as the French call it. Three going at it at the same time, instead of just you and me?"

He went all red with eagerness. "Yes, by all means. Oh, that's a splendid idea, my love. Call her down to join us between acts. Please do. You won't be sorry."

I figured that later, the girl could keep him busy while I stole the pax. At least, this was what I had in mind.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Her name was Willa Lubchek.

She had thrown a cloak about her shoulders and when she sat down at the table between us, I could understand why. The velvet nothingness that was her costume revealed knockers that threatened to pop into view at any moment. They were large and fleshy, and the velvet was small and weak. Pietr Kalinoff loved it.

She accepted a beer as we talked. She was very pretty despite the paint on her face, and Pietr was smitten by her. Her vivacity, her laughing good humor, was just the tonic we needed.

"Yes, I may accept dates," she acknowledged. "But three is crowd, is no? Is so I hear." Her eyes looked worried as they turned on me. I patted her arm and assured her that a trio was no crowd where we three were concerned.

"Pietr will have food and drinks served in his room," I added. "We will be able to relax and enjoy ourselves."

Black eyes shining, she nodded happily. "Is good. Like to, yes. If sure I not in way."

I pulled her to me with a bare arm about her neck and kissed her full lips gently. Pietr was beaming. He insisted on the same privilege. His kiss lasted longer than mine, and when he let her go, Willa was blushing. This was going to be a night, I told myself.

"One more show," Willa apologized with upraised eyebrows.

I patted her right thigh, Pietr fondled her left. "We'll

wait, darling," I assured her. Willa nodded eagerly. Free food and drink was a gift from the gods, I guessed. It would save her a day or so of paying to eat.

She inched her way closer to my companion and hunched her shoulders, giving him a look down as far as her bellybutton. So as not to make me jealous, her hand fumbled for mine and drew it toward her upper thigh. I petted her there a moment and she squirmed.

We waited eagerly through the next show, downing the bad whiskey, until Willa Lubcek swept toward us in street clothes. I was able to get a better look at her now than I had on the street. Her mini-skirt was short enough to display handsome legs; it was new and neat and very clean. Her breasts bulged out of her bodice, they seemed bigger even than mine, and she had a slim waist.

She tucked her arms in Pietr's and mine and away we went toward a taxi stand and a waiting driver. Willa plunked herself between us and gave her lush body to us both.

I guess she knew about the three-way party. She kissed Pietr with open mouth and stabbing tongue while her legs opened invitingly to my caressing hand. I slid my palm up her stockingled leg to soft, smooth, inner thigh flesh. Then I caressed her gently, teasing her farther up where the luxurious hair grew, until I heard her whimper in her throat and felt her stabbing motions with her hips.

She had us tabbed for husband and wife, I am sure, though she must have done some puzzling over his Russian and my American accent. Still, it was not for her to reason why, it was her job to earn the hundreds of crowns we were supposed to pay her with when we were done.

Sometime before we were at the Maly Hotel, the Russian began stroking up her left leg until his fingers and

mine met at her *con*. I was busy kissing Willa on her breast, which I'd worked free of her dress and slip. She wore no brassiere. I wanted to get her so excited she would wear Kalinoff out all by herself.

Pietr showed no surprise at meeting my hand. I guess he had me tabbed for a lez. After all, I had suggested the Blue Slipper and I had met Willa before. He figured he was just lucky to get in on the arrangement, especially since Willa appeared to go for him.

She was wriggling and panting to our caresses. My lips surrounded her hard brown nipple. Her hips flung themselves back and forth and looped in tight little circles to what our fingertips were doing. Her legs strained outward and then closed to imprison both our hands. She was groaning steadily, half sobbing in her delight.

I guess we were driving the poor girl out of her skull. At any rate her own hand went hunting for what made Pietr Kalinoff a man. When she found it, her fingers tightened. I slid my eyes around from where I was nursing on her breast to observe. He was a big man, indeed. Up until now I had gone at this bit of *octave* rather coldly, like a duty to be performed.

Now I started to feel the fires in my own girl-girl body. I drew back from the breast, saw it big and bloated, white and heavy in the lamplights that the taxi passed. I glanced downward. Pietr had swept the mini-skirt up to her garterbelted belly, exposing the dark thatch and pallid thighs above her nylons. The sight of our hands burrowing into her made me swallow. I told myself to go easy. It wouldn't do for me to lose my head the way my two companions were losing theirs.

I had to keep my cool. It was damned hard to do.

If I was ever going to steal that pax, I must plan the

night ahead, I kept telling myself. It was imperative for Willa to be making love with Pietr when I made my try at walking off with the pax. Even better, they should be sound asleep. I must not let myself get too involved, or too excited.

When the taxi stopped I got out fast, paying the driver and tipping him generously. I helped Willa get her skirt down, and assisted her from the cab. Pietr was red-faced and panting like a bellows, but my whispered warnings brought him to his senses. He tried to look the suave man about town as he strolled across the sidewalk with us and into the hotel.

We got into the elevator. Pietr stood between us with his hands on our behinds, petting and stroking us. Willa was standing with glassy eyes, her red mouth a little open. Lipstick was all over Pietr's lips, but the operator pretended not to notice.

I breathed, "I'll run ahead and open the door."

I ran, gripping the key which Pietr Kalinoff had given me, making no sound on the thick corridor carpeting. Willa and Pietr had their arms about each other as they followed in my wake. I inserted the key in the lock and turned it.

Just before we pushed her inside, Willa turned and plastered her wet mouth all over Pietr's lips. I had to get out into the corridor and use both hands on his broad back to push them inside.

Dim gas lights had been left on. It made a good setting for a bit of an orgy. The Russian had his palms up under the mini-skirt, gripping her soft white buttocks as he half carried her across the room. She was working her lower belly up and down and sideways on his straining flesh like a kootch dancer.

"Break it up, break it up," I muttered.

They thought I wanted in on the action. They got apart, then wedged me between them with Willa plastered to my front and Kalinoff jammed against my rear. I was a girl-girl sandwich, up on my toes, supported by their moving bodies. I forgot about my brown velvet and net evening gown. I flung my arms about Willa and placed my hands where Pietr had put his. Our tongues caressed as we kissed.

"Let me get my dress off," I moaned after a time.

They could not wait. They broke free of me and ran into the bedroom. I bent and, gripping the pink lining and nude-net skirt of my evening gown, yanked it upward over my head and off. I sent it flying through the air as I went after the other two into a big bedroom. I wanted to go about this sensibly, like a general planning a battle. But my breasts were so hard with wanting they merely nodded to my running, and the rest of my female self was panting all over the place.

Pietr was lifting Willa's dress over her head, leaving her in a slip that was tangled about her breasts. The rest of her was wearing garterbelt, shoes and stockings. She looked dazed as the dress came off and he reached for her pink slip. She swayed back and forth and there was a silly little smile on her full mouth. Her bare arms were above her head to make it easier for the Russian.

I began to undress Pietr. He was solidly built, a little fat about the middle where he was fast developing a paunch, but his chest was very hairy and his manhood was raring to go. Just as he was stepping out of his shorts, Willa opened her eyes, saw him, and grabbed for the goody with both hands. Pietr jerked and cried out happily.

"Let's do this right," I shouted.

They ignored me. Willa was sinking to her knees, her

mouth open. Pietr was beaming and fastening his fingers in her hair. The rules of the *seance à trois* demand that all three love partners work together. By rights, I should be in on the fun, too.

Both Willa and Pietr were naked, though the girl was still wearing her garterbelt and stockings. He was yelling like a bull and stamping both feet as the girl worked on him. His eyes were closed. So were hers.

A little corner of my mind told me that this was a good time to find the pax. Neither of them was interested in anything but each other, right now. I ran for the big brown leather valise resting on a small table at the foot of the bed.

My fingers dug in among clothes. They touched hardness and tissue paper. As quietly as I could I drew out the pax, took a quick look at it to make sure that this was the pax the Devil had shown me, then tucked the thing under a striped shirt.

I couldn't just walk out. My buddies were getting properly heated up. I ran toward them putting one hand on Pietr, the other on Willa, real low. I wriggled my fingers. Pietr lifted up on his toes. The girl scrunched lower.

"Not—so—fast," Pietr panted.

"Faster, faster," moaned the girl.

I eased them down toward the bed. I realized I was general for the night. It was up to me to direct operations.

I shoved Pietr Kalinoff to his back. I straddled his loins and sank down in St. George position. I beckoned Willa to ease herself onto his head, as the Victorians used to express it.

In seconds, we were all yelling in delight, though the Russian's voice was more than somewhat muffled. Willa and I were free to give vent to our happiness, which we did with girlish squeals and yelps.

Now, I didn't want to exhaust either of my companions, just yet. I wanted them to enjoy themselves no end until they were safely sound asleep. So I slowed the action. I made Willa dismount and sit herself on the edge of the bed while I phoned room service for a bottle of vodka, a bowl of ice and glasses.

Willa kept squirming around, staring at Pietr Kalinoff. She was trying to be a good sport about this but she definitely was in need of her jollies. At last she could hold back no longer. She scrambled up and over Pietr and sank down on him.

"Is got to, is got to," she told me.

I let them go at it. I merely added my fingers and my lips to the loving, bringing each of them to their peaks, again and again. My own needs had been assuaged somewhat by the Russian in my brief straddling-the-spike position. Besides, I did not want to exhaust myself. I was the one who had to stay awake.

So I acted like an orchestra conductor, though the baton was wielded by Pietr Kalinoff. They were already in the 69 position, so I tugged Willa off after she had convulsed several times, and pushed her over on her back. I yanked Pietr forward and upward. He fell on her heavily.

The action went on for quite a while. Then Pietr belled and shook and collapsed on top of Willa. He was out cold. He was starting to snore by the time Willa and I could get him off her.

She said, "He's out for a while, honey—but there's you and me."

Willa Lubchek was a two-way tootsie. She devoted herself to me, and her devotion went on and on until Pietr showed signs of reviving. Then she pushed my thighs back and turned to him.

"How about a little drink?" I asked.

She said nothing, so I filled a glass with vodka, added an ice cube, and handed it to her. She swallowed the whole thing without taking her eyes off her prey. We had caught a tigress by the tail when we signed on this honey-pot. She gave me back the glass. Then she bent over the man and began to lip service him until he was moaning with delight.

"Kneel on the bed, sweetie," I breathed.

Willa nodded eagerly. She was stoned, I could see that. I figured she might even fall asleep, kneeling on the bed. I pushed her over, positioned her with her knees well apart on the mattress edge. Then I handed Pietr a glass of vodka without ice cubes. He opened his mouth and the vodka disappeared down his gullet.

I jerked my head at Willa. Pietr nodded soberly.

I got him to his feet. I turned him, braced him, helped him make contact. After that, he was on his own.

I left them sawing away at each other.

The pax was too big to fit into my handbag, so I got a towel from the bathroom and wrapped it around it. I slipped it under my brown velvet and nude-net evening gown, which was lying on the floor.

My buddies were still pounding away. I took time off to stare at them, admiring their erotic endurance. A corner of my mind told me that when they collapsed, it would be for hours and hours. Long enough for me to make it out of Prague.

Back and forth went Pietr, around and around in a looping motion went Willa's bare white hips. I was dying for a piece of the action but being behind the Iron Curtain and about to steal a most valuable bit of spy data made me cool it.

I dared not leave until they were done.
And asleep.

I slipped closer to the bed. Pietr was bent forward, both hands gripping Willa's dangling breasts. I reached under her, caught her brown nipples protruding from between his fingers and pinched them. Willa howled with delight. Her hips bounced. Her middle jerked. She must have tightened something in her *con*, too, because now Pietr was shouting hoarsely. His flushed face and glassy eyes told me he was near his limit.

I had to hasten his journey. I reached behind and under him. I began scratching 'spider's legs.' He fell forward, his entire body shaking and shuddering. His weight drove Willa down into the mattress. She lay with one side of her face pressed to the counterpane, her entire front following suit.

Pietr lay on top of her, legs protruding over the mattress edge. He looked uncomfortable. I urged Willa to crawl forward. They were lying across the big bed in perfect position for sleeping. I knelt beside them, patted their heads. I even crooned them a lullaby. If David Anderjanian could have seen me like this he would have died nine deaths. Oh Oh Sex putting a couple of far-out sexpots to sleep by crooning sleepy-bye tunes to them! Hell, I'd have done more than that to get away from here safely.

Pietr snored. Willa took about half a minute longer, but then came in on the same beam. To their twin snores, I slipped from the bed and into my Menendez gown.

I tiptoed around, putting out the gas lights.

Then I turned them on again, very low. I didn't re-light them. The faint odor of gas filled the room. I would telephone from the airport to make sure they didn't die.

Turning tail, I ran for my room.

I dared not carry the pax in my luggage, in case some customs inspector got curious and made me open all my bags. I looked around my suite, wondering how I was going to get it out. Then the answer dawned.

From my valise I snatched up a girdle. I slipped the evening gown off over my head and undid my garterbelt. I wriggled my hips into the girdle. Then I pulled the Lastex away from my belly and slid the pax down inside.

I gasped because it was cold against my flesh. I twisted my hips, managed to get the thing more or less comfortable. It acted as a superstay, keeping in my middle to a nice, straight line. Then I corralled my other curves into my sharkskin traveling suit.

I hadn't unpacked, so it took only seconds to ring for a bellhop to carry my bags to the lobby. I paid my bill, explaining that I was homesick.

My taxi-driver was waiting on the sidewalk, as he'd promised. He got my bags into his old car, I slipped into the back seat and we were off.

There was an early Air France flight leaving for Paris via Rome. I bought a ticket. At Rome I would transfer to a B.O.A.C. plane leaving for London. Then I phoned the Maly Hotel and pretended to be a guest roused by the smell of gas from Room 378. The sleepy clerk was sleepy no longer. He would attend to the matter right away.

I walked toward the big French jet with a clear conscience.

Sleep was my companion all the way to Rome.

At Leonardo da Vinci Airport, there was a two and a half hour wait. I slept some more in the waiting room. Before the jet took off for London, I telephoned ahead.

After a bit of telephone juggling, Dennis got on the wire.

"Be there by noon," I told him. "Meet me. I have something important to show you."

"Right-o, ducks!"

Then I was airborne again.

We came down in a mild fog over Heathrow Airport. It was a grey day above England, damp and raw. There was rain in the air as I trotted down the steps and angled my walk across the field toward Customs.

Dennis Keller was waiting outside to greet me, in the shadow of the Barclay Bank money-exchange booth. His face lighted with delight as he stepped forward.

"Pet, you're a wonder," he laughed, and kissed me.

I kissed him back pretty good, and nudged him with my loins. He grunted and backed away, saying, "What the hell?"

"I had to put the pax someplace, you idiot. There wasn't time to carry any luggage with me. It's inside my girdle. Now let's go get it off."

"I'm dying for a look," he grinned.

"Never you mind."

We slid into a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, a big black car with glass partitions between the driver and us, so we could talk in privacy. Out of the corner of my eye I saw another black car slide away from the curb behind us and follow.

I briefed Dennis on what I had done since I'd last seen him, but my mind wasn't completely on what I was saying. The black Daimler behind us was coming fast. I turned my head and stared back at it.

I gulped. I knew the driver. It was my would-be rapist-friend from the Red Lion Inn in High Wycombe.

"Get ready, Dennis," I breathed.

I was reaching for the telephone to alert the driver when

the Daimler picked up speed and came easing past on our right.

"Down!" I screeched.

I grabbed Dennis by the neck and dragged him down on the floor of the Rolls by force. At the same time glass shattered in the car windows and rained down on us as bullets erupted in a steady flow from a pair of machine-guns in the Daimler. I heard the driver cry out as the car lurched.

"Crikey," breathed Dennis.

"It's the High Wycombe crowd."

Dennis fumbled at his shoulder holster and brought out a Webley revolver. He lifted his head. The Daimler was moving off, ahead of us by twenty feet, and gaining fast. I sprang to the window, lowered it, pushed myself out so I hung half in and half out of the window, resting my hip on its edge. In England you drive on the left-hand side of the street, which made it a little awkward for me to snap off my shots.

I got off three bullets; Dennis, two.

One of our bullets missed its target but hit the street and ricocheted into the right rear tire. The tire exploded and the Daimler started swinging back and forth out of control.

I ducked back into the tonneau.

"We got them, Dennis. Come on, we can pick them off when they start piling out of the car."

Dennis was looking at our driver. His hand was on the glass panel, sliding it back. "Jim, you all right?"

"Winged me arm, guv'nor. I can use me left."

"No, stop the car," I said. "They can't go far or fast on a tireless wheel. This thing has a radio connection with London L.U.S.T., doesn't it?"

I saw the radio mike even as I spoke. I reached to grab it. I got the despatcher and talked for a few seconds while the Rolls Royce zeroed in on the Daimler, which was pulling over to the side of the road. There was a woods near here. My guess was that the B.A.D. boys would be piling out of their car and running in between the trees. They followed my mental script perfectly. They came out of the big car with machine-guns and revolvers in their hands, and they started running.

Dennis was yelling to Jim to slow down. He opened the car door. Steadying his revolver he took aim and squeezed the trigger. One of the men carrying a machine-gun fell face-down, unmoving. One of his buddies, with only a revolver, turned back to grab the fallen machine-gun.

I stuck my Belgian Bulldog out the window and fired. The man sagged to his knees and rolled over.

Then we were off and running toward the woods.

Me, I angled my feet toward that machine-gun. It held more bullets than my handgun. Dennis was ahead of me, almost in the woods by this time. I saw movement between the trees, screeched for him to hit the dirt. I lifted the rifle, fired at what I had seen. A revolver spat red flame at Dennis, already dropping. My bullet clipped a circle of twigs and branches and then hit flesh. A man screamed, I heard a body falling.

I headed for timber myself. To one side, Dennis was up and running. Out here in the open we were sitting ducks, but apparently only one man had turned back to make a stand.

Gratefully I oozed between two treeboles. Here it was cool and green, with underbrush all around. Carefully I began my stalk, weapon at the ready. I did not hear Den-

nis, so I assumed he was being as careful as I. There had been five men; three were dead. The odds were even.

If Dennis and I didn't shoot each other, that is.

I knew he was off to my right about thirty yards, so I kept moving to the left, hoping to meet one of the B.A.D. boys on the way. I slithered through the woods half bent over, studying the shafts of golden sunlight seeping through the leaves overhead, telling myself that at any other time I would be sighing in ecstasy over the clean smells, the woodsy fragrances.

Right now I had all I could do to keep alive. The machine-gun was getting heavier in my hands. I kept bumping it on treeboles and catching it in the bushes. I was about to throw the thing away when I saw the man, crouched on the ground before me, half hidden in some berrybushes.

He whirled. His revolver came up.

He fired.

I went backward off my feet, dimly aware that he had killed me. I was feeling pain down where I lived, in my mons Veneris. The bullet must have plowed in, gone up to my belly. I was probably hemorrhaging internally. I would be dead in a matter of minutes.

As I fell, I was determined not to go alone. I hit the dirt, the barrel of the machine-gun came around, and I was pumping lead at the man in the berrybush. The bullets cut a red swathe across his chest. He shuddered and jerked, he went backward into the hole of a big oak. He hung there a moment as though the bullets had pinned him in place.

Then he fell over on his side.

I lay there on my back and waited for my heart to stop. There was no pain. I was surprised. A bullet plowing into my mount at an angle and going up through my intestines

should hurt like Billy-be-damned. Actually I felt fine, outside of a bit of soreness where my blonde bosk grows.

Gingerly I put a hand down, felt myself. No blood, no wetness. Under my fingertips I felt the hole in my tweed skirt and the carved metal panel of the pax. Then it dawned on me.

The bullet had hit the pax and bounced off. I was alive and well in a woods outside Heathrow Airport, on the road to London. I giggled. I turned over on my front and I laughed hysterically as the tears came into my eyes. I pounded the dirt with my fist.

I sat up, wiping away the tears. Then I made it to my feet and lifted my skirt all the way to my navel. I bent over and peered down at myself, pulling away my girdle. There was a dent in the front panel of the pax, but that was all. I heaved a sigh of relief.

“Hold it right there! Don’t move!”

I froze, my skirt showing my body all but naked below the upraised skirt. The voice had sounded like Dennis Keller’s shouting out that order. I wondered if he had lost his marbles.

“Let the gun drop.”

My hand opened and the machine-gun fell.

“Turn around and put your hands against that treebole behind you.”

I swung about but the nearest tree was ten feet away. I said, “I’ve got to walk over to it. Okay?”

“What? Oh, Eve—be yourself. Stop clowning.”

Dennis came into view, backing slowly. He turned his eyes and raked the naked part of me with great relish. He said, “I was talking to this man, not you. But if you want to go on displaying your legs and that pretty behind of yours, not to mention the—”

I dropped my skirts. "Dennis, of all the underhanded tricks, making believe I was—"

"Hold it, Eve. Your display helped us capture the last man. He had his gun up about to shoot me when he saw your skirt go up. I took advantage of his momentary attack of voyeurism to get the drop on him." He raised his voice, "All right, you. Back up nice and easy and with your hands still on your head."

The man came into view. He was the would-be rapist whom I'd left tied up at the Red Lion Inn in High Wycombe. He looked sheepish and embarrassed.

"Well, hello," I caroled. "Who set you free?"

He cursed under his breath.

Dennis chortled, "He's just what we want, Eve. A live, breathing member of the opposition. And don't bother swearing at me friend. That's the way the biscuit breaks, and there's nothing you can do about it."

We moved through the woods toward the road. As we came out on the grass plot bordering the little forest, two cars were pulling up. Men piled out of them, began to run toward us.

After that things became even more frantic. Our captive was identified as George Worth and bundled off to L.U.S.T. headquarters. Dennis and I were to be taken along to make our reports. A detail went into the woods with the police to attend to the dead men, while others were putting canvas sacks about the bodies on the grass.

A crowd had gathered by this time which lined both sides of the street. Bobbies were being rushed by motorcar to keep people in line. A doctor was busy setting Jim's arm and telling him he'd have to go to a hospital.

Dennis caught me by the hand. "Come along, pet. We have to make out our reports."

I sank beside him in back seat of the Rolls Royce. Another L.U.S.T. man drove us through Kensington and Chelsea to Knightsbridge and on to headquarters for the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists, London branch. I stumbled after Dennis up a flight of stone steps and under a stone archway into cool dimness.

There were a couple of old typewriters in the room into which Dennis led me. He sat down before one and gestured me to the other. "Help yourself, pet. Time for the paperwork."

I was in no mood to pound typewriter keys, but duty was duty. I tried to put down on paper what I had gone through since the night of the Black Mass in Exmoor Abbey. I merely outlined in general terms what I had done, with and without Dennis Keller.

Every so often as we typed away, Dennis kept glancing at his wristwatch. Before he was through with his report, he got up and signaled me with a crooked finger.

"Come along, Eve. There's something I want you to hear."

As I fell into step with him, he said, "We've developed a new technique for interrogation. The man to be questioned is locked inside a room painted in what is known as 'stress paint.' It works on his psyche. George Worth has been in the crying chamber for close to an hour."

"Crying chamber?"

"Our pet name for it. Come, listen."

Half-a-dozen men were grouped about a mustachioed man with a balding head who was hunching shoulders over a microphone. Through the speaker part of the assembly, we could hear the muffled sobs of a man.

Dennis whispered, "That's Worth."

"But what makes him cry?"

"The paint, pet. It's hideous. Listen."

The mustachioed man said, "There now, Worth. It isn't all that bad. We just want to know how many more of you there are, and where we can pick them up for interrogation."

"S-si-sixteen of us, a-all told," he sobbed.

He gave names and addresses which a tape recorder picked up, between sobs. He was a badly broken man, his nerves seemed frayed to snapping. I felt a little sorry for him.

"What about California?"

"Ten there," babbled Worth. "Three of them are with the Government, which I-lets them lay their ha-hands on highly secret stuff. They relay their information on to us by way of booklets heavily coded, mimeographed or printed on their own machines. We do the engraving part here, translating that code into more code, and send it on to Paris. In Pa-Paris we have that store, *Siccard et Cie*. You know about that, I gu-guess."

"Yes. Go on."

"The object is shipped to Prague where a gentleman from Moscow picks it up. I don't know his name, I never knew."

Pietr Kalinoff, I thought. I wondered how he and Willa were doing at the moment. My job was mostly all finished. I felt I could relax about now.

They unlocked the door into the crying chamber after more questions, and led a weeping, dazed George Worth away. Dennis caught my arm, brought me with him into the room.

The floor, walls and ceiling, the table and single chair were all painted the same color, a flat bluish black that was absolutely hideous. As Dennis closed the door behind

us, my lower lip started to quiver. What that color does to your spirits is incredible. Mine sank down to rock bottom. I felt actually ill.

"It's unbelievable. It makes me sick to my stomach. No wonder that man started bawling. I'm going to do some crying myself, I swear."

"We can't have that," Dennis smiled. "We'll leave, I just wanted you to see this place. Now you know why he talked. And nobody can do any chanting about police brutality."

"There isn't a mark on them, when they walk out of here, but they've spilled what they know. I call this room a conscience charger. Put a man in here for half an hour and he'll blab his guts out."

"Brrrr," I shivered. "Open that door."

We walked out into cool sanity.

"What about the pax?" I asked.

"Well, what about it?"

"Don't you want it? I mean, that's the whole idea of this caper, to get the thing back."

"You're an American, ducks. It's up to American L.U.S.T. to take the pax out of your girdle and check it. Not that I wouldn't like to have the honors."

"Yeah, hey. I appreciate your interest, Dennis. But I suppose I'll have to call David for my orders."

"We've already put in a call to him."

"Well, aren't you the willing ones!"

He laughed and caught me by the elbow, rushing me past a number of closed doors and out through a metallic reception room done in blue and silver. I stumbled along with him, realizing I was pretty much beat.

"I'll take you to the Grosvenor House, pet. You will

have your old room back, you know. I rather imagine you want sleep."

For once, David Anderjanian did not disturb me in my resting hours. I crawled naked—except for my girdle with the pax inside it—between the sheets of my big bed, after Dennis Keller had kissed me good-bye, and I lay like a corpse for about ten hours. I can go without sleep when I must, but when I do slumber I really pile up the zees.

The telephone rang at high noon.

"What are you, on a holiday of some kind?" the telephone snapped at me. It was dear David, being his most Davidish. "Grab a plane and come on back."

"You bet, boss," I mumbled, still half asleep.

"Only get a ticket to California. They're having a witches' sabbat in the back country out here. I want you to take the plane to Los Angeles. I'll meet you at the airport."

"What about this witches' sabbat?" I asked a dead line.

David Anderjanian can be very exasperating at times. I slammed the receiver down into its cradle. If he thought I was going to a witches' sabbat, he had another think coming. I squirmed around. The pax was starting to chafe my bellyflesh. It was like carrying a shallow frying pan around with me. Aside from the fact that it very definitely inhibited my love life, it was damn uncomfortable while sleeping and walking.

The faster I got to Los Angeles, the better.

I phoned Dennis Keller, I phoned the airport. I packed my bags. Before two o'clock I was in a taxi heading for Heathrow Airport, for a scheduled four p.m. flight.

I half expected another attack, despite the fact that British L.U.S.T. was rounding up the last few members of the B.A.D. boys. They could have flown over a killer or

two from French B.A.D., had not the L.U.S.T. boys also raided them.

No attack occurred.

I walked up the boarding ladder and into a VC-10 jet. The B.O.A.C. plane would touch down in New York, where I would transfer to a Pan Am 707 bound for Los Angeles.

The trouble did not begin until after I reached California. David Anderjanian was there to meet me, big and handsome, the answer to a girlish prayer. His tanned face under its mop of blond hair was split with a grin.

"You did great, honey," he told me, folding me into his arms like a long-lost sweetheart.

His big hand patted my belly. I said, "Hey!"

"Just want to make sure you've got the pax on you. I see you have. Keep it that way."

"But my girdle is killing me, David."

He chuckled. "Won't be for long. This witches' sabbat is set for tonight, we only have a couple of hours to get you there."

"Isn't it a little risky? I mean, suppose they search me?"

"That's what we want them to do."

"Give me that again, slowly."

"We want proof of some wrongdoing, aside from the confessions British L.U.S.T. got. The Supreme Court might knock that confession of George Worth's into a cocked hat. You remember the Mendoza case, where confessions were declared not worth a damn unless the confessor is made aware of his rights?"

"If they capture you, remove the girdle and take the pax, we'll have them. We barge in, we grab them all."

"Oh, yeah? And how about me?"

David told me not to worry. Little did he know!

CHAPTER EIGHT

A coven of witches consists of a dozen couples with a high priestess to lead them in their devotions to Satan. Witchcraft is the 'in' thing in England, and surprisingly enough, in many parts of the United States right now. California ranks big with the coven crew, but New York, Kentucky, New Jersey and Ohio, have their own brand of Satanism.

As his Camaro raced along the Freeway on its way toward the Tehacheri Mountains, David clued me in on what was going to happen.

"Your partner will be a warlock, a man we've managed to slip into the group of witches. He's a bachelor, he brings different women to the ceremonies. The others are used to this. You'll be his new flame."

"Sounds groovy," I mumbled.

"You won't wear anything, they never do at the covens except for some bracelets and a knife. The knife has a black handle, it's called an 'athame'."

"Never mind the witch stuff, tell me about the pax. Once they find that, they aren't going to cover me with posies, you know. Besides, won't it make them suspicious? They must know that I got that pax in Europe. So why the hell would I have it with me?"

"You've got to figure out those details, doll. The mere fact that you have it on you is enough. I don't give a damn about reasons why, what I'm after is making them take some sort of action against you that will give us the excuse for moving in."

"Suspicious? Hell, yes, they'll be suspicious.

"They'll want to hold you for questioning. They'll probably figure on torturing you some, to make you talk."

I turned to him, fists on my hips. "David, you are the complete stinker. Doesn't it bother you even the tiniest bit that my body is going to be tortured?"

"It won't be, it won't be. We'll be there before anything happens."

It is times like these when things go wrong. I pointed this out to my case officer. I also told him about the Devil and how he'd trapped me after hypnotizing me. I added that I suspected it was his posthypnotic suggestion that gave him the power of sticking that obeah doll full of pins so I would feel the pain.

David was very impressed. He had not heard about the Devil until now, which only went to prove how clever a man the Devil really was.

"Suppose the Devil shows up, David? Man, like I've had it, then. You have no idea how painful a sword is, driven into your belly—even a psychosomatic sword."

"Yeah, well, we'll be there before that happens."

I brooded about it. David Anderjanian could swear to be on time on a stack of Bibles, but I was the one who was playing footsie with fire. Still, there wasn't anything I could do but obey orders.

I did ask, "Do I give you a signal of some sort?"

"No need. We'll be watching, ready to act." The Camaro was climbing steadily as David fed it gas. "But to get back to the coven. Most of the people there are innocent of any wrongdoing. They're California husbands and wives who are out for kicks. They'd be horrified if they thought they were involved in subversive activities. So you'll conduct yourself accordingly.

"You're to play a girl friend of Ed's out for some fun. No more. You'll strip down with the rest, you get to wear the bracelets and carry the witch's knife. Cute notion, isn't it?"

"Oh, great. What else do I need?"

"A broomstick for the dancing but that will be furnished when you get there. Now remember, Eve, we're within earshot of the rites, nothing will happen to you. We just want them to make their try at you. Since British B.A.D. got the word from Paris, I'm sure the American branch has been warned, too."

"I can't wait to see how they'll kill me. With a bullet? By strangulation? Poison? Stabbing? The guillotine?"

"It won't be that bad," David soothed.

"Well, I should hope not!" I screeched.

Along Route 6, a maroon Mustang waited, pulled off to the side of the road. David braked behind it and got out. A man emerged from the Mustang, wearing sports jacket and shirt. He was almost as big as my case officer. They met, shook hands, and came back to where I was waiting.

"Eve, meet Ed Pearce," said David.

Ed nodded, smiled faintly. He seemed a serious sort of man, there was none of Dennis Keller's lightheartedness about him. A faint scar marred his jawline. It made him look slightly sinister. He was well-built, not as wide in the shoulders as David, but he gave the impression of strength, that he could take care of himself in a pinch.

I said, "Looks as if we're partners, Ed. Anything you want to tell me? About how you intend to play this?"

"By ear," he murmured.

I got out of the Camaro and walked toward the Mustang, glancing around at the Tehachari Mountains. This was a lonely spot, this was the only road in miles. The

witches had picked a good place for their shenanigans. David waved an arm, I waved back.

Ed Pearce got in the Mustang, started the engine and off we drove.

After a time I said, "I understand we go to this coven in the nude."

"Right."

"Where do we undress?"

"There."

He was no orator, this boy. Yet there was an air of competence about him that I liked. I sank back into silence and watched the land move by. The sun was sinking behind us, into the Pacific. It would be dark in two hours. We would be at the coven grounds before then. I wondered if we all undressed together.

Half-a-dozen cars were already in the parking lot when we pulled up alongside a cement block building with a tin roof and a loading platform in the back. It was an unprepossessing place; the name DANFORD SHIPPING COMPANY was stenciled on a wooden sign hanging on the wall. There didn't seem to be anybody around.

I slid a nyloned leg out of the car, then followed it with the other and stood up, stretching, waiting for Ed Pearce to give me a hint of what I was supposed to do. He looked around, nodded, and said, "Okay, come along. You go in the women's section."

I followed him across the parking lot carrying my handbag which held my witch bracelets and the athame. I had to run to catch up to him.

"I'm wearing the pax under my girdle. Did you know that?"

"You're safe enough."

He gave me a frosty smile. Then he turned on a heel

and walked off. I trotted after him. I caught up to him just as he was about to go in the door marked WARLOCKS.

I opened my mouth and closed it. There might be people behind these doors, close enough to hear what I had to say. I pressed my lips together.

“See you in a jiff, darling,” I cried sweetly.

Ed Pearce grunted.

He went into his dressing room, I opened the door marked: WITCHES. I found myself in a lobby like the entrance into a small business office. There was a desk and a chair, some potted ferns, pictures on the walls. The floor was covered wall-to-wall with a beige carpet. There was nobody in the place.

I walked toward a blue door. I opened it. A blonde woman was walking along a narrow corridor. Her eyes sharpened at sight of me.

“This is a private club,” she announced. “No visitors allowed.”

“I’m with Ed Pearce,” I beamed.

She gave me a little smile. “Oh, I’m sorry. Ed does bring strange girls down here from time to time. Come along, let me check, then I’ll assign you to your dressing room.”

She turned up the lights in the lobby. Her hand went to the telephone. I glanced at the pictures, recognizing Hans Balding’s *Witches’ Sabbath*, flanked by Antoine Watteau’s *Three Witches*, the Goya picture showing an old witch and a young witch straddling the same broomstick on their way to a sabbat, as well as another Goya, *The Goat Fiend*.

Apparently they went in for witch art, too.

“Yes, Ed . . . of course. Whatever you say . . . indeed I shall.”

She hung up and beamed at me. “Everything’s all set.

You're Ed's partner for the night, so you might as well get ready. If you'll come with me?"

I trotted at her heels to a door which she threw open. A dress, a girdle, some stockings and a slip, plus a brassiere, hung from a wooden peg in the left-hand wall of the room. A pair of shoes had been placed neatly before the chair below the peg. Evidently I got the right-hand side.

I got down to my bare skin. I put on a gold bracelet, I slipped the knife out of my handbag. I took the precaution of folding my girdle and stockings about the pax. Then I was ready for the coven. I carried the knife and walked along the corridor into a kind of sun lounge. A couple of women were sitting in easy chairs, smoking cigarettes and sipping cocktails.

"Hi," said a friendly brunette.

She was in her middle thirties, she looked like any ordinary housewife one can see on any street all across the country. Her big breasts sagged, they had blue veins below their smooth surfaces, the dark brown nipples bulged. She was attractive even if her belly, marked by a Caesarian birth, did pouch a little.

The other women were just as matronly. These were more housewives, out for some kicks, joining a witch cult. I put them down for honest citizens a little tired of their humdrum lives. No secret agents in this bunch.

I said, "Hi. I'm new here. I feel I'm a little out of my element, but I did want to join, I've read so much about witchcraft."

The brunette waved a hand. "I'm Cele. That blonde gal is Debby. The others are Clara, Doreen and Helen. Our husbands are having a drinkee in their own bar."

"To get up the nerve to come out bareass," giggled Clara, a pert little redhead. She was wearing a fall to

match her auburn locks. It spilled over her shoulders and down her back.

I poured myself a drink and settled down, feeling like a long-time wife myself. These girls were nervous, despite their brittle laughter. Their habits of a lifetime did not include sitting around naked or mixing with naked husbands not their own.

And if I knew my American sabbats, they would be taking those husbands, belonging to other women, in intimate embrace before the coven was over. They were naturally excited and I was excited myself, but for a different reason.

A few of their husbands were B.A.D. boys. I would be helping to arrest them, to put them in jail. I felt like a female Benedict Arnold as I sipped my cocktail and chatted with them.

The door opened.

A woman stood there, superbly lovely in tanned nudity, her breasts full and firm, pointing their big nipples at us. Her belly heaved slightly, the mound below her navel swelled with her breathing. She wore nothing but silver bracelets on her arm, a silver garter fitted with buckles, each buckle for a coven at which she had presided, a silver band with a half moon on her head. She carried a sword in her right hand. Her long black hair dripped downward, half hiding her shoulders.

"Ah, we have a newcomer. Good!"

She showed perfect teeth in a cruel smile. My feminine instincts being extremely well developed, thanks to my service as L.U.S.T. lady, I sensed that she could be a B.A.D. girl.

"I came with Ed Pearce," I said lightly.

"He does have good taste in females," the high priestess smiled. "Now follow me, all of you."

We went out the back door just as the rear door to the men's quarters opened and the husbands emerged. They too, were naked. At sight of the naked wives, their penises began to enlarge. I walked with Cele along a footpath between the trees, up a small slope and along a broader path in the woods.

Overhead the moon was at the full, a gleaming silver orb in a star-specked sky. The wind was calming and a hush fell across the world. In silence we padded along on our bare feet, the men staring at the bobbling buttocks of the women who were not their wives while the women feasted their eyeballs on the bouncing protuberances of the excited men. I began to see the appeal of these covens as a cure for boredom.

We moved along the path until we came to a clearing in the woods. A circle had been formed in the grass, of black and red flagstones. There were twelve black metal candlesticks resting on top of several stones. Each candelabra held a tall black candle.

The priestess lighted the candles while we took our positions on the flagstones. The red flames leaped skyward, quivering uneasily in the gentle wind.

Now the high priestess lifted the sword that was her ritual weapon and scratched a furrow on the ground outside the black and red flagstones. The men and women stepped forward, I with them; we took our places inside the circle. I felt hands on either side of me, fumbling for my fingers. I did what seemed right. I held their hands.

We began a slow walk about the bonfire.

My companions began to sing, as broomsticks were handed out by the high priestess.

"Eko eko Azarak! Eko eko Zomelak."

The rest of their song was much the same, except that it mentioned words like Gananas and Arada. It was a rite of worship, I gathered, and the names Azarak, Zomelak, Gananas and Arada were the names of certain deities. Like the druids, witches worship the sun, adore old Sol for his life-giving rays. Witches, however, also worship the moon.

The four great sabbats are at Christmas; on May-day when the Beltane fires are lighted; on Lammas Day (August first); and on Midsummer Eve, June twenty-third, also on Hallowe'en, which is known as Samhain. The dates for these covens go far back into Time, predating Christianity by thousands of years.

The men and women began jumping with the broom-stick between their legs. Heavy breasts flew up and down, many manhoods bounced and grew. I gathered that the higher a witch could leap, the higher would be the crops when harvest time came.

The high priestess was using a censer now, from which a column of blue smoke was rising. She was chanting in a soft voice the incantation to the Mighty One, to his hand-maidens Artemis and Diana, Melusine, Cerridwen and Arianrod.

The words seemed to have a magical spell. I found myself mesmerized by the chanted, "Bagabi lacha bachabe, lo lamac cabi. . . ."

Something was forming in the shadows of the trees beyond the sacred circle. I stared, not quite believing what I saw. The two foremost gods of the witch covens are the 'horned one,' that throwback to antiquity who was Cernunnos to the Celts and Tarvos Trigaranos to the Gauls; and the moon goddess, Diana or Cybele, take your pick.

I was seeing horns on a man's head.

The horned head was in outline, it was solid black because of the shadows, but I knew that head. It belonged to—the Devil! My eyes went unbelievably down the big torso and the shaggy goat's legs.

I damn near panicked. I wanted to turn and run. But my fingers were held tightly on either side of me, and—

Red eyes gleamed in the black head.

The priestess went on with her chanting. This was one song that was going to raise the Devil, all right. As a matter of fact, the Devil was up and about, having decided, for some reason, to visit his worshipers as legend says he had done in medieval days.

For modern witch covens, a goat is substituted for the goat-god, that phallic deity who guaranteed good crops and strong sons. This night the Devil himself was with us. I think the high priestess saw him soon after I did for her words faltered, she gasped —choked—and then made a valiant effort to go on singing.

The others could see him now too. There were stifled exclamations, whispered curses, on all sides. I gathered that the Devil had never before made an appearance at this particular coven. The hands that held mine tightened until they damn near broke my fingers, but I didn't care. I was petrified with fright.

Did the Devil have that obeah doll with him?

Had he come because I was here?

Was I his prey for the night?

I could not answer those questions tumbling around inside my head. I found that my mind was as frozen as my body. I just could not think, all I could do was stand there inside the circle. It seemed that those red eyes held the

flames of hell inside them, but I realized that it might be the reflection of the bonfire on contact lenses.

The Devil stirred. The men and women around me moaned. Evidently they were under the same sort of spell I was myself. Their eyes did not believe what they saw, but they had been so whipped up by the dancing and the singing they were in a kind of trance, when anything might happen.

The Devil moved forward, placing its cloven feet daintily on the grass beyond the sacred circle. A woman swayed in the circle of human flesh, gibbering a little. A man spoke harshly to her, and she made a valiant attempt to come to her senses.

"My worshipers," a deep voice said. "I have come to join you, to lead you in the Satanic rites. Althea, my high priestess, has done well and has merited my approval."

He stepped inside the circle of power.

One by one, he searched our faces as he paced before us, slowly and with an odd divinity despite his shaggy goat's legs. A tiny smile curved his mouth, although his red eyes glinted with malice. He seemed to pause before me as if in recognition, but this may have been only my imagination.

He moved on, leaving me quite limp.

When he had finished his inspection, he stood in the exact center of the circle and smiled at his high priestess. She was regarding him with bulging eyes, her mouth partly open.

"Mighty One," she began quaveringly, when his hand lifted.

"The coven is suspended for the night," he said softly. "You have done well, Althea, and I am grateful. I am also grateful to you others. It is not your fault that enemies

have found their way into our coven. It was only to be expected, for we people of the Old Wisdom have many foes today just as we had in the early times when we worshiped together.

“These enemies must be routed, but this is a detail which I myself shall attend to, destroying them and all their efforts. You others may return to your homes and wait for another convocation call from Althea. One among you will remain.”

My legs were turned to stone. I could not move. I stood there motionless, watching the naked men and women turn and run for the dressing rooms. One or two of them stared at me, seeing that I did not flee. My eyes were caught and held by the red eyes of the Devil, and the sweat of fear came out on my forehead. Even Ed Pearce had deserted me.

I whimpered. The Devil was turning, crossing the circular line of power, moving toward the dark woods. And still I could not move. Run for it! my mind screamed. Flee from this place or die in agony!

There was nothing I could do, I was petrified. I could move my eyes to follow the progress of the Devil as he minced along into the woods, but that was all. My eyes searched that forest in despair, for I knew that when he returned, the Devil would finish me off.

Where was David Anderjanian? And the help he had promised?

Movement in among the trees caught my eyes. The Devil was coming and—oh my God! He held the obeah doll in one hand!

My throat made mewling sounds. He heard, and smiled. Silently he came across the grass until he stood within the

circle, right before me. His hand lifted the obeah doll and showed it to me.

"You would not be warned, Penelope. Too bad, too bad. You must die here then in agony. Observe, Miss Courage!"

The pin went into the doll. I screeched, doubling up, coming out of my frozen state, bending forward and beginning my groundward fall. I hit the dirt and rolled over and over. The Devil had stuck the pin into my chest. My entire torso felt bathed in fire.

I came up against his hairy legs, the cloven feet. I could not attack him, I could only keep my hands fastened to my chest against the searing fire that bit into my flesh.

A thick chuckle caught my ears.

"Poor Penelope! So pretty, yet in such terrible pain. I do not like to see you suffer, my dear. And yet, it is the one way I can strike at you without being accused of murder."

He drew out the pin. The fires were gone from my chest. My tear-wet eyes glared up at him. His right hand held the pin firmly. He turned the doll while I watched him and drove the pin into its backside.

"Courage," he called gaily.

I flopped around, knowing the searing awfulness of a hot swordblade dug into my rectum. The pain was so intense, I screamed. I was scratching my tender, girl-girl flesh on the ground, on the stones that lay there.

The Devil wriggled the pin around, laughing.

I fainted.

My eyes opened to the sight of the Devil crouched down a few feet away. The pin was out of the doll, but its sharp point was poised above its head. My eyes grew big as they watched that pin through the tears that blurred them.

Where the hell was David and the rest of L.U.S.T.?

I sniffled, feeling the tears run down my cheeks. "Must you?" I breathed. "Why don't you go away and let me alone? I've never done anything to you."

"Oh, my dear, my dear! You have, indeed. The clever little scheme I thought up to send information to the other side of the Iron Curtain by way of my Devil-worshiping cults—why, you've overturned the whole kit and kaboodle of them, practically all by yourself."

"I admire you and what you've done. Oh, my! Yes. But—

"I shall have to begin all over again, you know. This is why you must die, tonight. So as not to upset my apple cart next time. And you're going to die in agony. I'm going to make an example of you."

He stood up. He smiled down at me cruelly, sadistically.

"Stand up," he ordered.

Like a zombie without a will of my own, I stood erect. When he ordered me to follow him, I did. We walked toward the forest, and then along a little path that led to an open glade, bathed in moonlight. In the glade stood a large bronze statue of the goat-god, its evil expression horrifying, its long horns jutting boldly outward.

"One of the zoomorphic gods of Earth," he commented casually. "The horned gods, the animal deities. Tarvas Trigaranos. Cernunnos. Cousins to all the stag and bull gods the Earth has known. The goat-god is an evil god, I am afraid, however."

The Devil touched the massive statue. With a rumble of well-oiled hinges and powerful machinery, the giant goat opened up. Inside, it was hollow.

"Please enter, my dear."

My feet took me forward, up the metal staircase below

which, and centered under the hollow statue, was a bed of coals and twigs. I knew what was going to happen to me. The Devil was going to cook me alive.

My feet went on walking. Up the steps I went and now I could see what really terrified me. Bits of roasted hair and flesh clung to the interior of the goat-god. Apparently, the seated figure had been used before, for equally hellish sacrifices.

I stepped into the statue.

The Devil swung it shut. I could hear the click of a lock as it fastened to keep me inside. As it did, my paralysis fell from me.

I hurled myself against that bronze panel, I hammered it with my fists, I screamed and wept. Beneath me I could hear the whoosh of gas being lighted. Out of sight of the worshipers who might come here to kneel down and watch one of their number being sacrificed, was a gas cylinder which acted to heat the twigs and coals until they were flaming nicely on their own.

No use. All I was accomplishing was using up what air was in this tiny metallic womb where I had been incarcerated. I leaned my head against the metal door and sobbed.

I did not want to die. I wanted out. Badly! Badly! I wanted to see the night sky and the sunrise. I wanted to go to the movies and eat popcorn once again. I wanted to dine on steak with mushrooms and sip cold martinis under moonlight.

The night was still around me, though now I could hear the sussurations of the fire beneath me, and feel the growing warmth of the thick metal plate on which I stood. I shivered, thinking about the other sacrifices the Devil might have made to this goat-god.

It was dark, black as a snake's belly, inside this cooking pot. I felt blind. Then—ever so faintly—I saw redness.

A thin strip of scarlet ran down to the metal plate. I stared at it fascinated, watching the red change color to angry vermillion and then a dull scarlet. It dawned on me that I was watching the firelight as it flared and gathered strength.

I moved my hand to touch that slit.

Metal clanged on metal. I still held the athame knife with which I and the other people at the coven had invoked the witches' deities. My feelings had been so intense, my grip so tight, that I had not realized I hadn't dropped it.

I lifted the knife, to drive it at the bronze door that kept me from life. In time, my good sense came back to me through the mists of terror in which I was floating. I've never been so up tight against other spies or secret agents or even the armed militiamen of an enemy government. The Devil is something else again.

He bugged me, he froze my mental processes.

Fortunately, my thinking cap got to working again. There was a crack where the door did not fit properly, I am an expert lockpicker. I slid the thin blade into the crack and wriggled it around until it was under the latch that held the door closed.

My feet were cooking under me. I was dancing up and down on the metal plate. If I didn't get out of here soon—

The latch held. I moved the knifeblade slowly, carefully, fighting back my urge to panic. I felt it move upward. Ahh! The latch was set inside the thick bronze door. It fitted into a slot in the body of the goat-god itself.

The latch clicked back.

The door opened to sweet, cool night air. I leaped out,

not bothering to touch the few steps. I landed on the ground and bit my tongue against the pain of my burned footsies. I whirled and ran. I wanted out of this damn place—fast.

My clothes were in the dressing room. Everybody else had gone, by this time. I scrambled into the little cubicle where I'd left my things. My girdle had been tossed on the floor. The pax was gone. Well, if the Devil wanted it that badly, let him have it. David Anderjanian had left me to die in here, and I didn't give a boot in hell for the Devil or the rest of his B.A.D. boys.

This was incipient hysteria talking, of course. As I dressed I wept big, salty tears; in relief. All I wanted to do was get out of here. I straightened myself as best I could, slipped into my shoes, and bolted.

I got as far as the front lobby.

Then I came face to back with the Devil.

He was bending over the receptionist's desk, staring down at the pax. I remembered his telepathic powers, and realized he must know I had escaped and was here beside him, just as he'd known in his house in Paris. He showed no indication of it, however. Maybe he was too intent on the pax.

A siren wailed on the mountainside.

The Devil lifted his head. I reached for a potted fern on the wall beside the corridor door where I was standing.

The fern in its pot made a good weight in my hands. I threw it. At that moment the Devil turned, his red eyes glaring at me. I damn near fainted in fright. His stunned astonishment acted in my favor, it froze him motionless with surprise just long enough for the pot to thud into his forehead.

I came after it on both feet. My hand chopped side-

ways, the edge hitting into his neck. I can break a couple of boards with that blow. It landed solidly.

The Devil was only flesh and blood. He grunted and went down on a knee. My knee came up and into his face. Blood spouted from his crushed nose. He screeched in mingled pain and mad fury, his hand thrust at me, catching me off balance. I sat down on my behind while he whirled and ran into the corridor that led into the men's dressing rooms.

My obeah doll was in there, I'd bet my life.

I was up and after him in seconds.

He raced into a large room that was his office and dressing room. There was a hooded iron stove there in which a fire was blazing merrily. In that fire he was destroying records of the Beatific Association of Devil-worshippers, records that L.U.S.T. would dearly love to have in its possession. He was ignoring the fire, however, leaping instead for that little old obeah doll.

I hurled myself at him like a Green Bay linebacker making a tackle. I hit him about the middle and drove him backwards and off balance right into that oversized *hibachi* grill. The stove went over, spreading flames and coals every whichway.

The Devil tried to toss my obeah doll after them, right into the heart of the flames. He screeched, "You'll die in flames yet, Miss Courage!"

I felt a pain, all right, but it was a dull one; it didn't stop me from slamming the edge of my hand down across his already broken nose. His body flopped like a gaffed fish. My other hand snatched up the doll and flung it out into the corridor.

I rose up and dove the heel of my shoe right at his jaw. It landed with an absolutely delicious thunk. He went

backward, his head cracked against the iron leg of the overturned stove.

Flames were running up the office drapes and wall. I saw the Devil was out cold. I snatched up handfuls of the papers he had been about to burn but which he had interrupted to retrieve the pax from my girdle.

I made two trips before I got it all. By this time, the flames were all across the room and spreading. I caught the Devil by the heels and dragged him out into the corridor. Then I ran for the lobby.

My hands grabbed at the records and at the pax w' ere I'd laid them on the receptionist's desk. Clutching them to my bosom, I ran out into the night. The siren that had disturbed the Devil was wailing louder and louder. Now it had been joined by half-a-dozen other sirens.

Eight police cars swept into view. With them was David Anderjanian's Camaro. He was out of his car and running toward me.

“Eve! You all right?”

“No thanks to you, you big spalpeen! You're hours late! What the hell kept you, damn you? I almost got cooked alive, back there!”

I dropped the pax and the records and let him have the flat of my hand across the chops. Honestly, I was so overwrought that I could have clawed his eyes out. Two big State troopers grabbed me on the rebound, held me wriggling and squirming there, fit to be tied.

David grinned ruefully, massaging his bruised cheek.

“I guess I don't blame you for the dramatics, Eve—but really, we aren't but a minute late, if we're that much. Ed Pearce got to us, told us what was happening. He didn't stay and rescue you because we wanted this Devil of yours to make his try at you so we could nab him.”

Sanity slipped back and I realized that the coming of the Devil had upset all our calendars. The coven was to have been allowed to run to its end before David showed.

"I'm s-sorry," I muttered, "but I've been through a lot, David."

"You're still my doll," he grinned, wrapping me in his big, muscular arms. When he does that to me, I go all mushy. Usually, that is. Right now I jerked my head back and stared up at him in horror.

"The doll!" I screamed.

I broke free and ran back toward the building. It was a mass of red flames by this time. If that obeah doll was on fire, I was going to die here and nothing at all could save me.

CHAPTER NINE

The corridor was in flames. Those red tongues ate at wood and carpet, and they were hot. Hot! I put my left forearm up before my face and inched forward. The obeah doll lay against the baseboard where I had tossed it. It was smoldering. In another moment it would burst into flames.

My hand stabbed out, my fingers wrapped themselves about the doll. I drew it back to safety.

I stared into the red maw of the fire. The flames were all over the building now. I had hoped to run in and get the Devil and drag him out into the night and to the fists of David Anderjanian. But no man could live in that inferno, not even the Devil himself.

I backed out, clutching my doll.

David was there to wrap his arms about me. "Come on, Eve. Let's blow. The troopers can finish up. I grabbed all those records you brought out. There's enough in there—despite what must have been burned—to break up the whole B.A.D. crowd here in California. You've done a fine job."

I let him lead me to the Camaro. My right hand still held the obeah doll against my left breast. David glanced at me and the doll, but he said nothing until we were well along on our all-night drive back to Los Angeles.

"Want to tell me about it?" he asked gently. "The doll, I mean, and why you're hanging onto it as if your life depended on it?"

"It does, David," I assured him.

I explained about the fire-pit trap in the stone house in Paris and how the Devil had tried to kill me after using the obeah doll to torture me. I also explained how I had escaped and how the Devil had used the obeah doll to torture me again and again.

"It works, David. But what am I going to do? If anybody who sticks a pin in this thing can hurt me—how can I ever protect myself?" I opened my eyes wide. "If I put it in a safe, I may suffocate from lack of air. If I leave it around and a fire starts, it'll be me that burns to death!"

"Hogwash," David said inelegantly.

I turned on him. "Listen, you! I was the one who did the suffering. It was my nerves that screamed with pain when those pins went into this thing. *I know!*"

David chuckled. "Prove it to you, once we get back to that motel you're staying at. All that guy did was hypnotize you and use his stage props so effectively he made you believe in what you saw.

"I'm not saying I wouldn't have been affected the same way. But it was you he had before him, to work on. He hypnotized you in the voodoo cellar, he made you come to him and submit to him.

"He must have added some sort of posthypnotic suggestion to you at about that same time, or while you were passed out. He made you believe that whenever you saw him do anything to that doll, your body would feel the pain the doll might feel if it were alive."

"Hold on, David," I yelled. "I felt that pain when the Devil was nowhere around. He was miles away, while I was riding in a car with Dennis Keller. How do you explain that?"

David shrugged. "Then it must have been something

else that would trigger your responses. A word, perhaps. Is there some word he kept using over and over again?"

I shook my head. "None that I can remember."

He reached over, patted my thigh. "We'll find out the answer, just don't worry about it."

He swung off the Freeway and to the motel where I was staying, a little after sunup. He came into the room with me.

"I'm beat," I told him. "I'm going to take a shower and hit the sack."

David nodded, taking the doll from my fingers. He turned it over and over, studying it. I paid him no mind, I lifted my dress and flung it. It was all I had on. I went on walking toward the shower, not caring whether David was ogling my shifting behind or not.

I got into the glass-lined shower and turned on the water. My hand reached for the soap. I sudsed up and cleaned myself good, staring down at the scratches and bruises on my body. I spent half an hour in there.

Then David yelled, "Eve? You all right?"

"Sure I'm all right," I yelled back.

"Then take a look."

He slid back the glass door and showed me the doll. It had a dozen pins stuck in it. I gawked at it dumbly, not caring whether David was seeing me all bare and wet. My eyes rose to meet him.

He grinned. "I've been sticking pins into this thing, burning it with matches, all sorts of things. You haven't let out a peep."

"But—when he did it, it hurt so bad I screamed!"

"It wasn't the doll, it was some word. What word, Eve?"

"I—I don't know." Then I said wonderingly, "You

called me Eve. He never did. He only knew me by the name I'd used in England, Penelope Courage."

"Penelope," David said. Then: "Courage."

I screamed. My body felt like a pin cushion. David pulled out all the pins and nodded. "That's the word, all right. Courage."

Again the pain ate into me, but not so bad. The combination of the word and seeing the Devil stick those pins into that obeah doll had convinced me that the voodoo magic of the obeah doll was hitting on all cylinders.

David nodded and tossed the doll onto the bathroom sink. "We'll get you down to a psychiatrist who's also a hypnotist. He'll be able to remove the posthypnotic suggestion, I think."

"And—if he can't?"

"Then you'll have to live with it, honey."

I reached for a big shaggy bath towel and began rubbing myself off. "David, do you think he's dead?"

"The man you call 'the Devil?' He must be. Nobody could live in that burning building. He didn't run out. I had troopers all around that place. No, he's dead enough. You can relax now, and forget him."

I wondered. . . .

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